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Volume 88, No. 10 September 2008

The RING

Confessions Of A Gym Rat

I haven't been to Joe Frazier's gym in a long time. But when the news broke that it was up for sale, half-forgotten memories of my misbegotten youth surfaced, taking me back to a time when Smokin' Joe's North Philly punch emporium was arguably the hottest gym in the world.

Compared to most Philadelphia boxing gyms, Frazier's was palatial—adorned with larger-than-life photos of its namesake, with lots of floor space, plenty of punching bags, floor-to-ceiling mirrors, and a regulation-sized ring. Even the showers and the toilets worked.

By the time I began hanging out there on a regular basis in the mid-1970s, Frazier's career was winding down, but the gym was at its peak. Not only did most of Philly's finest fighters train there at one time or another, dozens of pugs from around the globe flocked to the famous sweatshop, hoping some of the magic would rub off on them.

Frazier's Gym was not in the best of neighborhoods, and on one occasion my buddy, promoter J Russell Peltz, had a box of irreplaceable fight films stolen from the trunk of his car. Ironically, it was one of Russell's movies that provided the catalyst for my favorite Frazier's Gym memory.

Bennie Briscoe and Russell had recently returned from Paris, where Briscoe had knocked out Tony Mundine. There had been no TV coverage of the fight in the U.S., so everybody was eager to see Russell's homemade movie of Bennie's big win.

After training was finished, about 20 people, including Briscoe, gathered to watch. There were exclamations of appreciation as Briscoe almost cut Mundine in half with a bodyshot and then bludgeoned him to the canvas for a fifth-round knockout. But the best part was yet to come.

The movie didn't end with Briscoe's arm being raised in victory. It continued in the winner's dressing room, where a euphoric Peltz planted a sloppy kiss of joy, smack on Bennie's lips. The gang at Frazier's instantly erupted into fits of laughter that built to epic proportions as a string of ribald comments, more suitable for *Penthouse Confessions* than THE RING, reverberated throughout the gym. This was, after all, the epicenter of Philadelphia machismo, and poor Russell never quite lived it down.

As the years went by and the always-prickly Frazier became more and more difficult to deal with, most of the top fighters drifted away and his gym gradually lost its reputation as *the* place to train. By the time THE RING's Eric Raskin visited to interview Joe in '99, Frazier was living in a modest apartment above the gym and the place had taken on a decidedly forlorn aura.

But for those of us fortunate enough to have been regulars during its glory days, the thought that such an iconic institution may soon be gone forever is sad indeed.

Thinking back, I realize how lucky I was to share the unique camaraderie of the gym, a place where some of the toughest men to ever draw a breath readily accepted a longhaired hippie and a geeky promoter into their company, simply because we all loved boxing.

***

Please note: The next issue of THE RING will have a cover date of Fall 2008 (on sale July 29), followed by the October 2008 issue (one sale August 26). This is being done to bring the cover dates and the on-sale dates closer together. All subsequent issues will have a monthly cover date. This change will not affect the number of issues subscribers will receive.

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[Opening Shot]

Coming To America

Arthur Abraham might have had a harder time going through airport security than he did with Edison Miranda, if he planned to come to the U.S. in that getup. The proud owner of the IBF middleweight crown was scheduled for his first fight in America shortly after this issue went to press, and while the German has some fun during this photo op in Berlin, he knew he'd have to be well prepared to meet Miranda. Though Abraham beat Miranda on points the first time they met, in September 2006, the Colombian did manage to break his jaw in two places and send him to the hospital.

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

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PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

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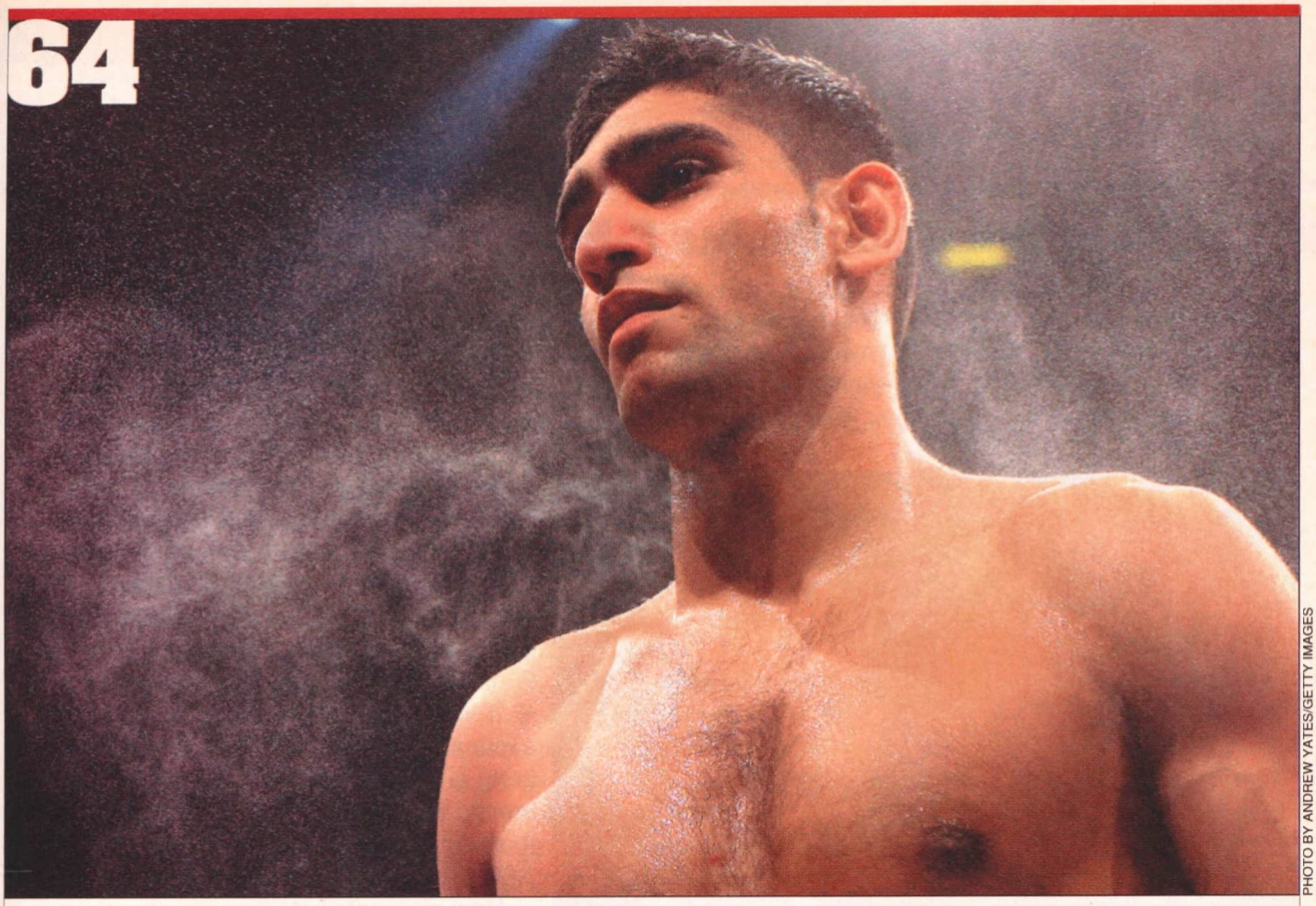

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You Sure You Spell Collins S-N-E-D-D-O-N?

THE RING Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins, recipient of the James J. Walker Award for long and meritorious service to boxing, posed with fellow-award winner and infinitely more recognizable Floyd Mayweather, who received the Edward Neil Award as 2007's Boxer of the Year the same night. The Boxing Writers Association of America presented both honors at its 83rd annual dinner, held this year in Los Angeles, two nights before Oscar De La Hoya's victory over Steve Forbes down the freeway.

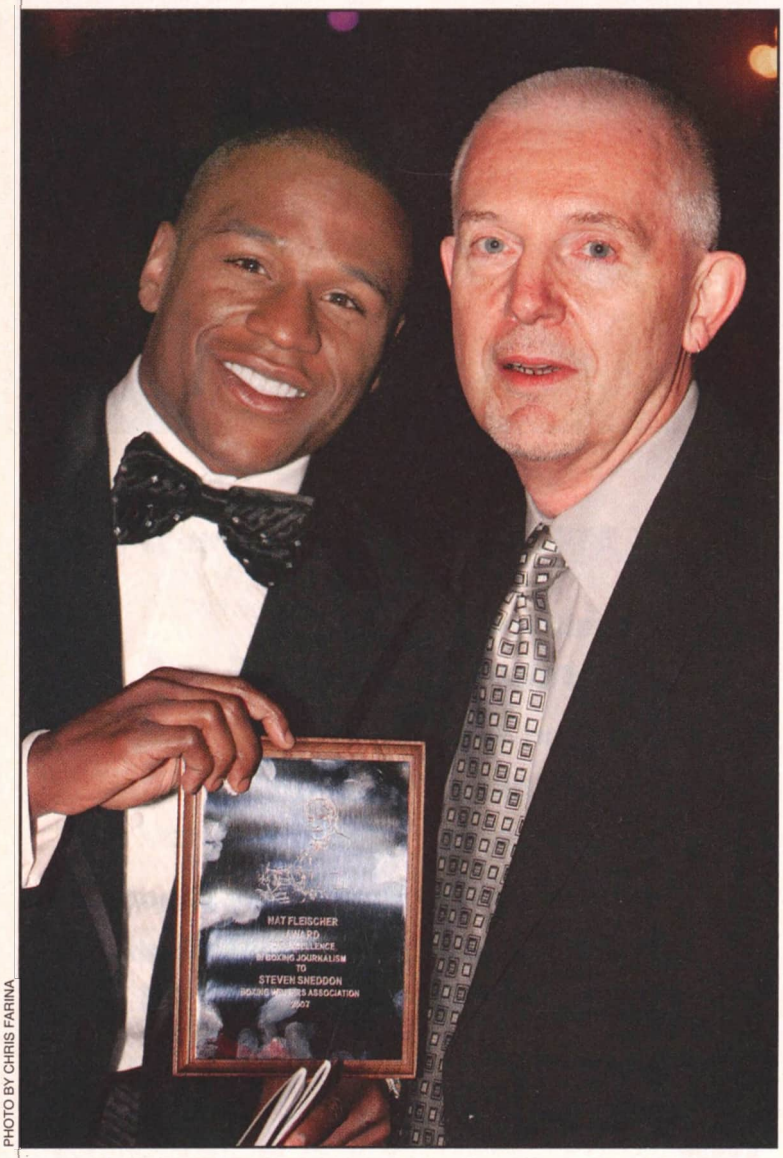

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Pretty Boy and semi-blind editor at BWAA dinner

Collins, who began his career covering dinosaur battles for *Cave-Dwellers Digest* (original issues were carved in stone, making circulation a nightmare), was at the helm when this magazine made the transition to the full-color version you hold in your hands and remains the driving force behind the revival of THE RING championship belts. He's also proudly holding the wrong award in the photo! The BWAA accidentally gave him the one meant for retiring Steve Sneddon of the *Reno Gazette-Journal*, who received the Nat Fleischer Award for excellence in boxing journalism.

"I wasn't wearing my reading glasses," explained Collins, who apparently failed to bring a copy editor to the dinner. He walked around with the wrong dingus until he caught the mistake, reportedly while attempting to pawn the item at a nearby shop.

Most recipients kept their remarks short and sweet, which was much appreciated by BWAA members and guests. THE RING's Don Stradley took two second-places in the Barney writing competition (named in honor of Barney Nagler), for best event coverage and best column. Contributing Editor Eric Raskin received honorable mention in the feature category, as did RING freelancer Don Steinberg.

With all those boxing writers on the scene, the open (no-charge) bar was a mighty challenge for the Biltmore Hotel's bartender, who didn't realize what he was in for but came through like a trooper.

Attending fans got to mingle with fighters, managers, trainers, and other boxing personalities. Among the fighters were Bernard Hopkins and Israel Vazquez, whose second bout with Rafael Marquez came in second in the BWAA balloting for 2007's Fight of the Year award, which went to the first Kelly Pavlik-Jermain Taylor bout.

Other award winners were Enzo Calzaghe (Futch-Condon Award for trainer of the year), Nick Charles (Sam Taub Award for excellence in broadcast journalism), Cameron Dunkin (Al Buck Award for manager of the year), Teddy Atlas (Marvin Kohn Good Guy Award), and fighters Lamont and Anthony Peterson for perseverance in overcoming adversity.

—Ivan Goldman

Rocker Kayos Crooner

After the ubiquitous "Gonna Fly Now" theme from *Rocky* sounded, approximately 26 million viewers watched Michael Buffer deliver his trademark "Let's get ready to rumble" line. Two combatants, gloved-up and ready to go, entered the arena, one wearing a blue silk robe, the other dressed in red. But instead of one of the biggest fights in boxing history, it was the final week of *American Idol*—live from the Nokia Theater in downtown Los Angeles.

In one corner was David "Sugarfoot" Cook, a 25-year-old rocker from Blue Springs, Missouri. In the other was 17-year-old David "Babyface" Archuleta, a pop stylist from Murray, Utah. Cook clearly had the height and reach advantage and was several weight classes heavier than Archuleta. But in a battle of the vocal chords, the contestants never have to go near the scales or a tape measure.

If they were boxers, Cook would be the hard-punching slugger, while Archuleta the slick boxer. Yet despite what was at stake, rather than 12 rounds, this was a three-rounder with each vocalist belting out a trio of songs. Also, unlike a professional boxing match, the winner would be decided by the viewing audience, which might not be a bad idea for the Sweet Science to adopt, considering some of the whacky scores handed in by boxing judges.

Completing the boxing theme was HBO's blow-by-blow man Jim Lampley, who offered occasional advice ("Winning is all about trusting your instincts."), which worked just as well for Cook and Archuleta as it would have for two boxers in a championship fight.

Even Simon "Legree" Cowell got in on the act, spouting this pre-sing advice to the contestants: "You've gotta have a desire to win and you've got to hate your opponent."

Sugarfoot emerged the winner by garnering 56 percent of the 97.5 million votes cast. It's unlikely Babyface will be asking for a rematch in a ring.

—Nigel Collins

PHOTO BY MICHAEL BECKER/FOX

Buffer introduces Cook and Archuleta

DON'T MISS WILLIAM DETTLOFF

EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: thering-online.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, The Ring's senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The effects of steroids: If steroids compelled men to kill their families, the terrible sound of James Toney, married father of six, slinging deviled eggs down his throat would right now be echoing throughout his otherwise silent, corpse-strewn house.

Post-fight interviews: If you too were wondering why Vic Darchinyan made no real sense five minutes after getting pancaked, consider that five minutes before, he'd gotten pancaked. Why are people always surprised when a fighter who's just suffered a concussion says nonsensical things?

The white stuff: If you've never seen (Alexander) Povetkin, picture mayonnaise in short pants and gloves. This guy is so white he makes Sultan Ibragimov look like Wesley Snipes.

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

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TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
4/23/08	**Joe Greene KO 9 Joshua Okine** *Greene throws a mean low blow*	ESPN2	m	C	C	C
4/23/08	**Juan Urango KO 4 Carlos Vilches** *Would the fan in the 10th row please return Vilches' head*	ESPN2	jw	B	C+	C
4/25/08	**Roman Martinez W 10 Cristian Favela** *Drastic drop in opposition for Martinez after a strong 2007*	Telef	jw	B-	D	C
4/25/08	**Andrey Tsurkan KO 8 Jesse Feliciano** *The phrase too tough for his own good fits Feliciano*	ESPN2	jm	C	C	C
4/26/08	**Hector Camacho Jr. W 8 Kenny Kost** *Gee, we wonder why Camacho resurfaced on this PPV?*	PPV	m	C	C	C+
4/26/08	**Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 9 Tobia Loriga** *Has Junior already headlined more PPVs than his dad?*	PPV	jm	B-	C	C+
5/02/08	**Vicente Escobedo W 10 Roberto Arrieta** *Former Olympian has not scored a kayo since 2006*	Telef	l	C	C-	C
5/02/08	**Andre Dirrell KO 5 Anthony Hanshaw** *Great performance rescues Dirrell from obscurity*	Show	sm	B-	B+	B-
5/03/08	**Oscar De La Hoya W 12 Steve Forbes** *Was anyone else as impressed as HBO's announcing team?*	HBO	jm	A-	C+	C
5/07/08	**Reynaldo Lopez KO 3 Mike Oliver** *Oliver overlooks foe and straight left that put him face-first on the canvas*	ESPN2	jf	B-	C+	B
5/09/08	**Mike Alvarado KO 7 Michel Rosales** *Solid Alvarado continues march toward world rating*	Telef	jw	C+	C+	B-
5/09/08	**Mike Arnaoutis W 12 Lanardo Tyner** *Arnaoutis' performance was no Greek tragedy*	ESPN2	jw	B-	C+	C+
5/10/08	**Carl Froch KO 4 Albert Rybacki** *Europe produces super middles like Mexico creates bantamweights*	Show	sm	B-	C	C+
5/10/08	**Timothy Bradley W 12 Junior Witter** *Bookend loses to Judah and Bradley make Witter look worse then he is*	Show	jw	B	B-	C+
5/14/08	**Francisco Figueroa W 12 Luis Rodriguez** *Even fight on paper is won handily by Figueroa in ring*	ESPN2	jw	C+	C+	C
5/16/08	**Jhonny Gonzalez KO 4 Mauricio Pastrana** *Gonzalez most dangerous fighter without a title*	Telef	jf	B-	C+	C+
5/16/08	**Ji-Hoon Kim KO 1 Koba Gogoladze** *Kim lands the shortest left hook knockdown in recent memory*	ESPN2	jl	B-	C+	B-
5/16/08	**Shaun George KO 9 Chris Byrd** *Byrd loses 40 pounds and both legs*	ESPN2	lh	B+	B	C
5/17/08	**James Kirkland KO 1 Eromosele Albert** *Is this where the Aaron Pryor comparisons begin?*	HBO	jm	B-	B	C+
5/17/08	**Alfredo Angulo KO 5 Richard Gutierrez** *The kind of win that prepares prospects for title fights*	HBO	jm	B-	B+	B+
5/17/08	**Yuriorkis Gamboa W 10 Darling Jimenez** *Lapses of concentration could make Gamboa the next Judah*	HBO	f	B-	C+	C+
5/17/08	**Brandon Rios W 10 Ricardo Dominguez** *Opening bout sets high standard, nearly steals the show*	PPV	l	B-	B-	B
5/17/08	**Jorge Solis W 10 Miguel Roman** *Solis too cagey for rough-edged countryman*	PPV	f	B+	B-	C+
5/17/08	**Jorge Arce W 12 Devid Lookmahanak** *Flash knockdown and lack of urgency sink tough Thai*	PPV	jb	A-	B	B-
5/17/08	**Julio Miranda KO 5 Omar Salado** *Savage elimination fight softened up winner for titlist Naito*	PPV	fl	B-	B+	A
5/17/08	**Cristian Mijares W 12 Alexander Munoz** *Mijares is making a habit of beating big punchers*	PPV	jb	A	A	A-

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo

Boxing Bookshelf

Evander Holyfield has had one of the most colorful, inspiring, and strange careers in the history of boxing. That's why his recent autobiography, *Becoming Holyfield* (Atria Books, hardcover, 273 pages, $25) is somewhat of a disappointment.

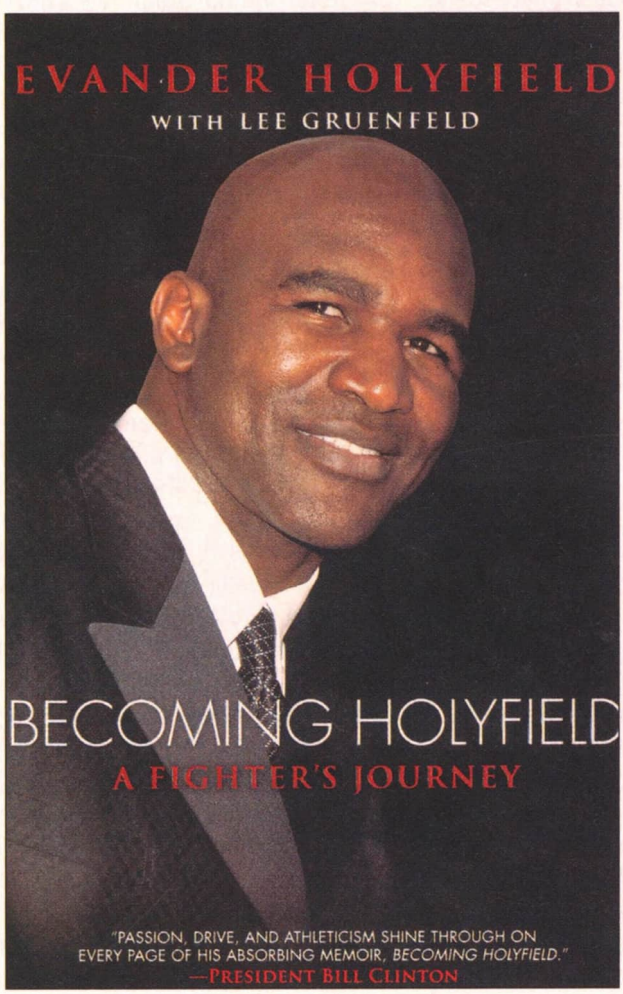
Most books of this type stick to a formula: poor child overcomes poverty to reach the top, usually with the support of a strong parental figure and a kindly coach. We open these books with a sense of ennui because we know we won't learn anything new. But not only is *Becoming Holyfield* a standard jock-autobiography, it actually skips over some key parts of Holyfield's career. For instance, there's no mention of his bout with Michael Dokes, which was a Fight of the Year candidate. Also, the descriptions of his bouts with Riddick Bowe, George Foreman, and Mike Tyson are surprisingly brief and unrevealing.

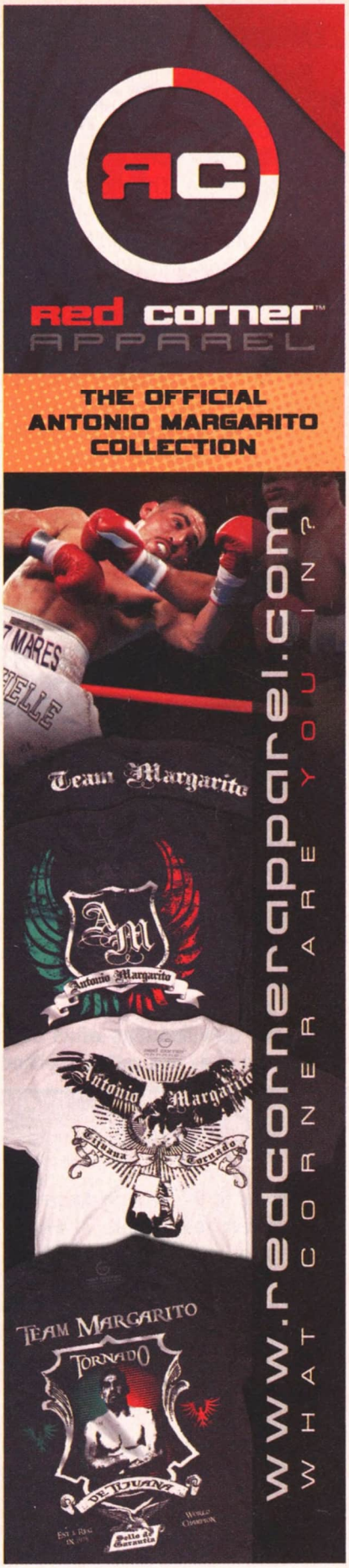
However, a more recent bout with Jeremy Bates gets nearly five pages. Some publishing wag must've suggested Holyfield focus on his comeback from shoulder surgery, as if that would make for better reading. They were wrong.

Since *Becoming Holyfield* reveals so little—Holyfield dismisses his recent steroid controversy as if it's beneath him to even comment on it—one wonders why the book exists at all. Perhaps some opportunistic publisher thought Holyfield might win his recent title bid, because the publishing date would've coincided nicely with Holyfield's return from Moscow. Another reason could be that Holyfield hints throughout the book that his next business venture will be in ministry. This book could serve as a primer for his flock, because he's at his best when talking about God.

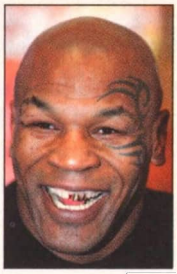
But sometimes Holyfield is difficult to take seriously. He constantly warns us to be careful with our money, yet he seems nonplussed by the many millions he's paid out in divorce settlements. For all of his down-to-earth platitudes, it appears that Holyfield never quite understands that the women in his life laid better traps for him than Lennox Lewis ever did.

—Don Stradley



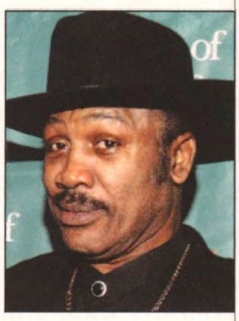


Outside the Ropes



Tyson: New documentary

Former heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson**, 41, received a prolonged standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival following the screening of *Tyson*, a documentary about his turbulent life. The movie was directed by **James Toback**, a longtime friend of Tyson's who had previously given the ex-fighter small parts in *Black And White* and *When Will I Be Loved*. "I lived a wild and extreme life," Tyson told reporters at Cannes. "I used drugs. I had altercations with dangerous people. I slept with guys' wives that wanted to kill me. I'm just happy to be here, you know. It's just a miracle." *Tyson* is scheduled for major release in the fall ... In early-May **Anschutz Entertainment Group** (AEG) entered into an agreement with **Golden Boy Promotions** to acquire ownership shares of Oscar De La Hoya's Los Angeles-based organization. AEG, a multifaceted company that owns sports and entertainment venues, including the Staples Center and The Home Depot Center, is planning to build a 20,000-seat, $500-million arena in Las Vegas, which "could dramatically change the boxing scene in Southern Nevada," according to *Las Vegas Review-Journal* boxing writer Steve Carp. Still, Golden Boy CEO **Richard Schaefer** said the partnership doesn't necessarily mean that AEG venues will be the sites for all of Golden Boy Promotions' fight cards. "We don't have an exclusive deal with them," said Schaefer. "We did that deliberately because we have a longtime partnerships in Las Vegas that we don't want to see end" ... The **Frank Bruno Boxing Academy**, named after the former WBC heavyweight titleholder, opened in South East London on May 22. The Academy was created through a joint partnership with Boxing4Schools, The Priory School, and Bruno, with the aim of allowing 16- to 18-year-old boxers to gain further academic qualifications while developing their fitness and boxing skills in a well-disciplined environment ... **Joe Frazier**'s landmark gym in North Philadelphia is up for sale, with a price tag of $2.4-million. Frazier, 64, opened the gym more than 40 years ago, shortly after turning pro following the 1964 Olympics in which he won the heavyweight gold medal. Frazier's business manager, **Les Wolf**, told Philly.com that an outright sale was only one option, and that Frazier would consider a joint venture with a developer to refurbish the gym ... Las Vegas boxing judge **Chuck Giampa**, who has worked fights since 1984, including more than 120 title bouts, has retired in order to concentrate on various business ventures ... Welterweight contender **Zab Judah** needed 50 stitches in his right arm after slipping and crashing through a glass shower door. The accident forced Judah out of his fight with **Shane Mosley**, originally scheduled for May 31 ... Former IBF lightweight titleholder **Paul Spadafora**, 32, was released from prison in early-May after prosecutors dropped parole violation charges ... The British Boxing Board has upheld the suspension of former featherweight contender **Scott Harrison**, which lasts until January 2009. The Board found Harrison, who has been arrested numerous times for alcohol-related incidents, guilty of bringing the sport into disrepute ... Unbeaten junior welterweight **Vernon Paris**, 20, suffered a major stab wound in the back in early-May. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, a man and a woman attacked Paris, 18-0 (12), after the boxer asked the couple to stop making noise near his home. Paris allegedly knocked the man down, only to be stabbed by the woman. As of press time, there had been no arrests in the incident, and Paris has relocated to Tallahassee, Florida, where he is recovering at his mother's home ... On May 6, retired featherweight **Gino Gelormino**, 47, was killed when he fell 35 feet from New York City's Triborough Bridge, where he was part of a construction crew doing rehabilitation work on the underside of the bridge. Gelormino, whose nickname was "Young Willie Pep," turned pro in 1981 and compiled a record of 31-3 (22) before ending his ring career with a second-round knockout loss to Jose Sanabria on May 18, 1990 ... Japan-based Chinese junior welterweight **Cho He**, 22, died on May 18, 15 days after suffering a brain injury in a bout with **Daichi Sakoda** in Tokyo. Cho, 5-6 (4), floored Sakoda, 9-1 (6), in the first round, but had fallen behind and was on rubber legs when the referee stopped the fight at 2:35 of the sixth and final round.



Frazier: Gym for sale

Gelormino: Killed in fall

Quotable

"It's led to the closing down of a load of Chinese and Indian restaurants in Hyde, so for that we apologize."

—Ray Hatton the father/manager of junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton, commenting on his son's eating habits, which have allegedly been transformed since he began living with his girlfriend, Jennifer Dooley

"I'm not an assassin. I'm just doing my job and trying to give a good fight. I respect all Mexicans."

—Manny Pacquiao, rejecting the "Mexican Assassin" nickname some have given him due to his many victories over Mexican fighter

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended May 19, 2008

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: David Haye has officially vacated THE RING world championship. THE RING will rank Haye once he fights at heavyweight.
Light Heavyweights: No changes.
Super Middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: Winky Wright is in danger of being dropped from the ratings. He is uninjured and has not fought in close to a year, nor does he have any fights scheduled. The last time Wright fought was July 21, 2007, losing a decision to Bernard Hopkins in a bid to win the light heavyweight championship.
Junior Middleweights: No changes.
Welterweights: Jackson Bonsu (10th last issue), who remains active and continues to win, switches with Kermit Cintron (ninth last issue).
Junior Welterweights: Timothy Bradley shakes up the division, debuting at two after his upset victory over Junior Witter (first last issue), who drops to three. Paul Malignaggi (second last issue) moves to number one. Bradley's inclusion drops everyone from three through 10 one slot each, pushing out Ricardo Torres (10th last issue).
Lightweights: No changes.
Junior Lightweights: World champion Manny Pacquiao has requested to wait until after the David Diaz WBC lightweight title fight in June to decide if he'll relinquish THE RING junior lightweight world championship. THE RING will honor his request.
Featherweights: No changes.
Junior Featherweights: Jhonny Gonzalez moves up from bantamweight to junior featherweight, debuting at number 10, where he replaces Rendall Munroe.
Bantamweights: The exit of Gonzalez (sixth last issue) moves everyone rated seven to 10 up one notch and makes room for Simone Maludrottu to enter at 10.
Junior Bantamweights: Cristian Mijares (third last issue) vaults to number one after beating Alexander Munoz (second last issue). Munoz drops to three and Fernando Montiel (first last issue) slips to two. Martin Castillo (eighth last issue) announced his retirement and exits, moving Z Gorres (ninth last issue) and Vic Darchinyan (10th last issue) up one place each. A.J. Banal enters at 10.
Flyweights: No changes.
Junior Flyweights: Omar Salado (seventh last issue) exits after getting stopped by Julio Miranda, moving everyone from seven to 10 up one place. That makes room for Adrian Hernandez to enter at 10.
Strawweights: No changes.
Pound-for-pound: Cristian Mijares moves into the 10 spot, replacing Rafael Marquez, who has lost two of his last three fights.

The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Light Heavyweight/
   Super Middleweight
4. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
5. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
6. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
7. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
8. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
9. **Kelly Pavlik**
   Middleweight
10. **Cristian Mijares**
    Junior Bantamweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended May 19, 2008

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

PHOTO BY OMAR TORRES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Junior bantamweight Cristian Mijares leaps from three to one in the ratings and makes his pound-for-pound debut

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 50-3 (44)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 30-1 (23)
3. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 24-0-1 (17)
4. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 48-1 (34)
5. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 15-0 (11)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 22-1-1 (17)
7. **OLEG MASKAEV** Sacramento, CA 34-6 (26)
8. **VLADIMIR VIRCHIS** Ukraine 24-1 (20)
9. **TONY THOMPSON** Washington, D.C. 31-1 (19)
10. **JOHN RUIZ** Chelsea, MA 43-7-1 (29)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 40-2 (29)
2. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 42-10-1 (21)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 39-5 (30)
4. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-5 (11)
5. **ALEX BUNEMA** Atlanta, GA 29-5-2 (15)
6. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Canada 30-0 (19)
7. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Germany 35-0 (22)
8. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-1 (19)
9. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 36-4-1 (23)
10. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Spain 41-1-1 (21)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 22-1-1 (15)
2. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 41-0-1 (22)
3. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 33-1-2 (23)
4. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 35-1 (15)
5. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 27-0-2 (19)
6. **NAOKI MATSUDA** Japan 28-7-3 (11)
7. **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela 25-0 (16)
8. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 24-4-1 (12)
9. **NICKY COOK** England 28-1(16)
10. **TAKAHIRO AOH** Japan 16-0-1 (8)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 43-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-5 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 28-2 (19)
3. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 34-1 (30)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 27-0 (10)
5. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 32-1 (21)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 29-1 (17)
7. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 28-4 (18)
8. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 54-3-1 (43)
9. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 25-1(19)
10. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 38-6 (32)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 23-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 61-3-2 (43)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 21-0-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 21-2 (17)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 53-6-2 (36)
6. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 25-1 (22)
7. **ABNER MARES** Montebello, CA 16-0 (10)
8. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 25-2 (16)
9. **ANSELMO MORENO** Panama 21-1-1 (8)
10. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 22-2 (10)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
   Philadelphia, PA 21-1 (11)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
   France 33-4 (22)
3. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
   Poland 34-1 (23)
4. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
   Poland 41-2 (31)
5. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
   Germany 29-3-1 (18)
6. **O'NEIL BELL**
   Atlanta, GA 26-3-1 (24)
7. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
   Wales 28-2 (21)
8. **MARCO HUCK**
   Germany 21-1 (16)
9. **VADIM TOKAREV**
   Russia 24-1-1 (17)
10. **RUDOLF KRAJ**
    Germany 14-0 (10)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 45-0 (32)

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA 48-5-1 (32)
2. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 27-4 (19)
3. **CHAD DAWSON**
   New Haven, CT 26-0 (17)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
   Miami, FL 47-12-2 (32)
5. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
   Hungary 29-0 (17)
6. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL 52-4 (38)
7. **CLINTON WOODS**
   England 41-4-1 (24)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
   Canada 25-0 (15
9. **CHRIS HENRY**
   Houston, TX 21-1 (17)
10. **JUERGEN BRAEHMER**
    Germany 31-1 (25)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 45-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
   Denmark 39-1 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
   Australia 31-3 (23)
3. **LUCIAN BUTE**
   Canada 22-0 (18)
4. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
   Mexico 27-1 (21)
5. **JEFF LACY**
   St. Petersburg, FL 23-1 (17)
6. **CARL FROCH**
   England 23-0 (19)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
   Tulsa, OK 26-1 (18)
8. **SAKIO BIKA**
   Australia 26-3-2 (16)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
   Germany 32-0 (24)
10. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
    Little Rock, AR 27-2-1 (17)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 33-0 (29)

1. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
   Germany 26-0 (21)
2. **WINKY WRIGHT**
   St. Petersburg, FL 51-4-1 (25)
3. **FELIX STURM**
   Germany 29-2-1 (13)
4. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
   Germany 29-2 (14)
5. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
   Finland 23-1 (16)
6. **RANDY GRIFFIN**
   Louisville, KY 24-1-3 (12)
7. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
   Spain 62-8 (42)
8. **RAYMOND JOVAL**
   Netherlands 37-4 (16)
9. **DAVID LOPEZ**
   Mexico 34-12 (22)
10. **GIOVANNI LORENZO**
    New York, NY 26-0 (18)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 39-0 (25)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 32-0 (26)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA 44-5 (37)
3. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
   Puerto Rico 25-1 (19)
4. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
   Augusta, GA 33-1 (24)
5. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
   Mexico 36-5 (26)
6. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 36-5 (25)
7. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
   Bronx, NY 34-2 (20)
8. **LUIS COLLAZO**
   Queens, NY 28-3 (13)
9. **JACKSON BONSU**
   Belgium 28-1 (23)
10. **KERMIT CINTRON**
    Reading, PA 29-2 (27)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 43-1 (31)

1. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
   Brooklyn, NY 24-1 (5)
2. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
   Palm Springs, CA 22-0 (11)
3. **JUNIOR WITTER**
   England 36-2-2 (21)
4. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
   Germany 29-2-1 (13)
5. **GAVIN REES**
   Wales 27-1 (13)
6. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
   Brooklyn, NY 28-3-1 (18)
7. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
   France 36-2-1 (21)
8. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
   Australia 46-9-1 (31)
9. **JUAN LAZCANO**
   El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
10. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
    Philadelphia, PA 28-0-1 (11)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 36-3-1 (22)

1. **NATE CAMPBELL**
   Jacksonville, FL 32-5-1 (25)
2. **DAVID DIAZ**
   Chicago, IL 34-1-1 (17)
3. **JUAN DIAZ**
   Houston, TX 33-1 (17)
4. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
   Mexico 25-3 (14)
5. **JULIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA 34-4 (25)
6. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
   Australia 23-1 (20)
7. **AMIR KHAN**
   England 17-0 (13)
8. **YURI ROMANOV**
   Belarus 21-2 (14)
9. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
   Las Vegas, NV 29-2 (17)
10. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
    Washington, DC 26-0 (19)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 46-3-2 (35)

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
   Mexico 48-4-1 (35)
2. **JOAN GUZMAN**
   Dominican Republic 28-0 (17)
3. **EDWIN VALERO**
   Venezuela 23-0 (23)
4. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
   Mexico 43-6-2 (27)
5. **JORGE BARRIOS**
   Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
6. **ALEX ARTHUR**
   Scotland 26-1 (19)
7. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
   Thailand 51-3-1 (40)
8. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
   South Africa 35-3-1 (18)
9. **MZONKE FANA**
   South Africa 27-4 (10)
10. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
    Houston, TX 27-4 (19)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
   Mexico 35-3-2 (14)
2. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 36-2-1 (27)
3. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
   Venezuela 32-3 (27)
4. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
   Japan 11-1 (7)
5. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 49-4-1 (37)
6. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
   Russia 29-3-1 (9)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
   Los Angeles, CA 26-4 (12)
8. **Z GORRES**
   Philippines 27-2-2 (15)
9. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Australia 29-1-1 (23)
10. **A.J. BANAL**
    Philippines 17-0-1 (14)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
   San Leandro, CA 19-1 (12)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
   Japan 32-2-3 (20)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 67-3-1 (35)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
   Japan 32-4-2 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 27-0-2 (17)
6. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
   Panama 24-2 (17)
7. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
   Thailand 43-1-1 (18)
8. **JOSE LOPEZ**
   Puerto Rico 35-7-2 (29)
9. **KOKI KAMEDA**
   Japan 17-0 (11)
10. **HUGO CAZARES**
    Mexico 26-4-1 (19)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 31-0 (6)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
   Mexico 26-1-2 (20)
2. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
   Bell Gardens, CA 18-0-1 (14)
3. **EDGAR SOSA**
   Mexico 31-5 (16)
4. **OMAR NINO**
   Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
5. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia 39-5-1 (30)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
   Puerto Rico 25-5-2 (14)
7. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
   France 23-2 (9)
8. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
   Argentina 17-1 (8)
9. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
   Philippines 44-10-7 (21)
10. **ADRIAN HERNANDEZ**
    Mexico 13-0 (11)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

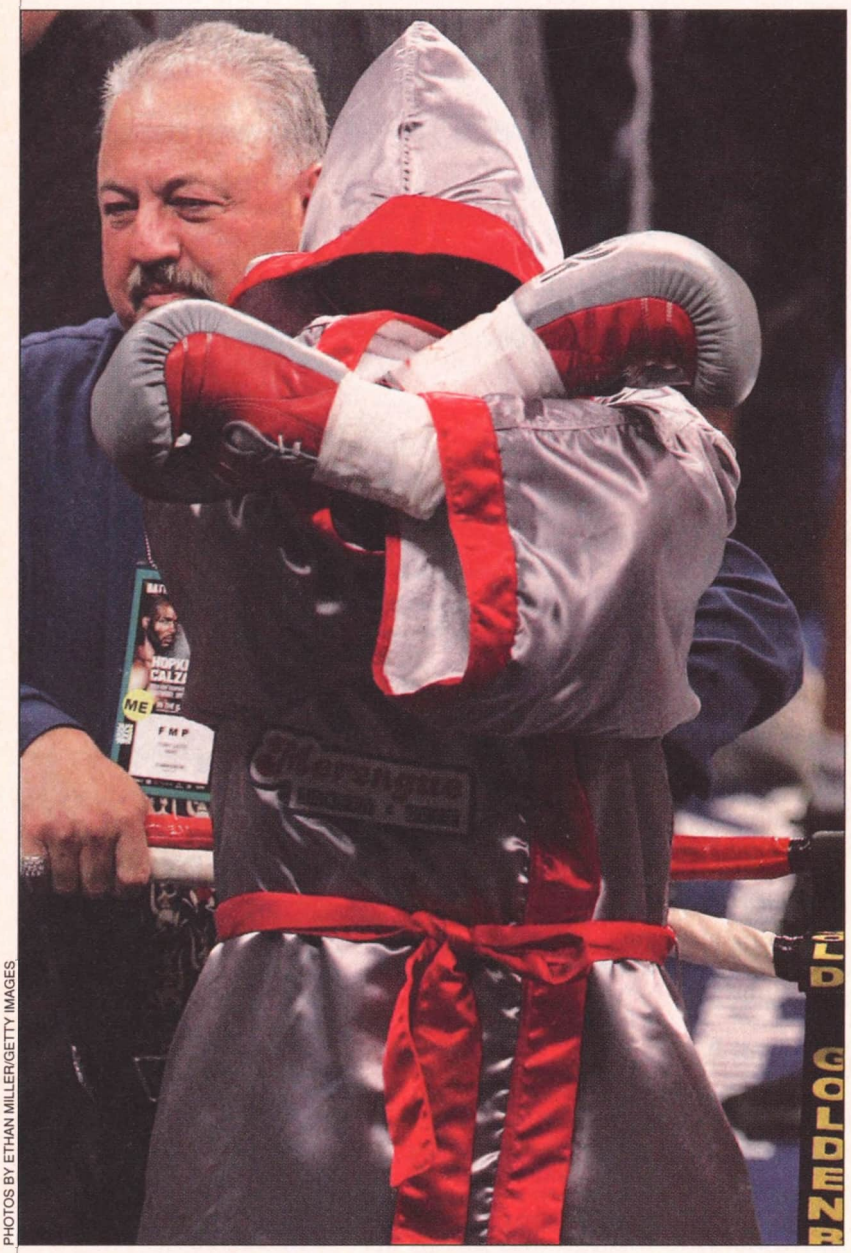
1. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
   Japan 23-1-3 (9)
2. **FLORANTE CONDES**
   Philippines 22-3-1 (20)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
   Thailand 26-0 (10)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
   Japan 18-2 (6)
5. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
   Indonesia 61-6-5 (31)
6. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
   Japan 21-3 (9)
7. **DONNIE NIETES**
   Philippines 22-1-3 (13)
8. **OMAR SOTO**
   Puerto Rico 13-1-1 (6)
9. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
   South Africa 17-0 (13)
10. **RAUL GARCIA**
    Mexico 22-0-1 (15)

By Jeff Ryan

Have We Had Our Phila Him?

Imagine my surprise when, during a recent trip to Philadelphia, it became apparent that Ben Franklin is alive and well, a full 218 years after his supposed death. Several Ben Franklins, actually. Drive down Chestnut Street and, right over there, Ben is leading a group of sightseers on a walking tour. Pass Independence Hall, and another Ben is happily posing for photos. A few hours later on South Street, yet another version of Ben is parading around, though this one's mission isn't quite clear. (Just craving a cheese steak, perhaps?) Here a Ben, there a Ben, everywhere a Ben Ben.

As if we hadn't already learned by the time the fifth sequel to *Rocky* was being released, legends don't ever seem to disappear in "The City Of Brotherly Love."



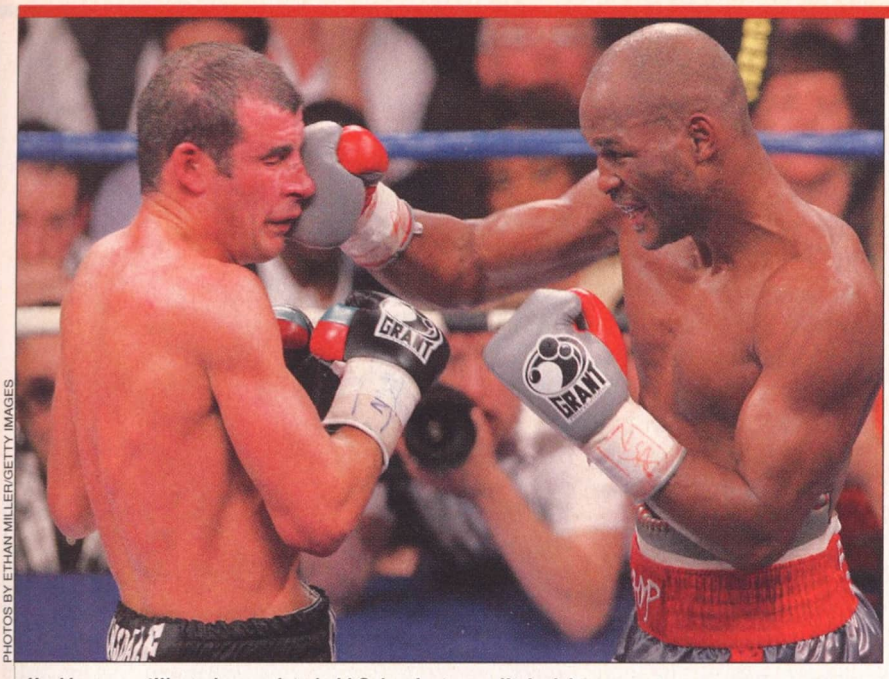
PHOTOS BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

"The Executioner" hasn't scored a kayo in four years

If Ben Franklin was Philly's greatest inventor, then its finest *re*-inventor has to be Bernard Hopkins. At the age of 43, and with two decades of professional experience on his resume, "B-Hop" keeps on hoppin and hopin'. Never mind that he belongs in a ring about as much as a Zamboni. He last scored a knockout four years ago. His record in his past five outings is 2-3. And, here's his worst transgression: He hasn't been fun to watch in a very long time. Hopkins' combination of defensive prowess, solid chin, savvy, cautiousness, and diminished punching power virtually assure a distance fight with limited damage inflicted on either combatant. Did we forget to mention that his fights are also a nightmare to score?

Add it all up and Hopkins sure sounds like a guy who should be encouraged to throw in the scowl, sink into the La-Z-Boy, and await the call from Canastota. Then again ... How in the name of Tony Bennett, Paul Harvey, and Julie Christie can we rudely demand the retirement of a fossil that can still do his job better than most?

In a sport in which so many can't-miss stars do miss (hello, Jeff Lacy and Jermain Taylor), how can we be so anxious to give Hopkins his gold watch and shove him off into the sunset? Didn't he deserve the decision in his first loss to Taylor? Didn't a Hopkins who was moving up, and supposedly used up, humble light heavyweight king Antonio Tarver as recently as two years ago? And for a guy who was well past his peak, Hopkins surely didn't do too



PHOTOS BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins was still good enough to hold Calzaghe to a split decision

badly if he was able to floor Calzaghe, an undefeated top-five pound-for-pounder, and drop a *split* decision. Hopkins, let's nor forget, always enters a contest in excellent physical condition and has never taken a bad beating. Or even a medium-sized beating, for that matter. The case for telling him to find another line of work is weak, at best.

So what becomes of Hopkins? He'll no doubt remain active, stuck in that limbo between not being able to execute the game plans of his youth, yet cleverly being able to prevent younger foes from executing game plans of *their* own. If Hopkins keeps on, it will be points verdict after points verdict, questionable decision (either way) after questionable decision. Not a great situation to embrace, but do we have a choice? Taylor, Winky Wright, Calzaghe. They each could have finished off the Hopkins story and thrown the book in the fireplace. Instead, they played the role of enabler for a guy who just can't quit.

And, it pains me to say, probably still shouldn't.

Penultimate Fighting: Your columnist isn't the kind of guy who will try anything once, but he will try some things twice. Like trying to understand the phenomenon of Ultimate Fighting, mixed martial arts, Elite Xtreme Combat,

PHOTO BY JOSH HEDGES/UFC

Ryan has reconsidered his opinion of Mixed Martial Arts

Personal Perceptions

The last word on everything from white bread to a bunch of baloney:

•You'll notice that we don't hear too much of that "White guys can't fight" stuff these days with pale faces (Calzaghe, Kelly Pavlik, and Ricky Hatton) making up 30 percent of the pound-for-pound top 10.

•The September rematch with Oscar De La Hoya is only the second sequel of Floyd Mayweather's career. Facing a fighter he's already defeated, might the "Pretty Boy" enter the battle overconfident and a bit bored? You're right, it's wishful thinking. But many of us are anxious to see Mayweather have to dig his way out of deep trouble some day. And we hold out hope that *something* will put him there.

•Mayweather is at that stage where his ticket-selling ability would probably benefit from his getting "decked" by a sparring partner during training camp. That's an old trick Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson used to create the perception of vulnerability, and it's surprising that a showman like the Pretty Boy hasn't employed it already.

•Did Steve Forbes forget that he was supposed to be trying to take off De La Hoya's head during their recent showdown? The way Forbes was initiating those touches of gloves and patting De La Hoya on the rump at the end of the rounds, you'd have thought he'd mistaken "The Golden Boy" for his teammate in a Sunday morning softball game.

•Forgive me for not clamoring for a third Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez fight. Pacquiao is my favorite active boxer, and it pains me to think of how much his decline might be accelerated if he tangled with Marquez one more time. We saw what vicious trilogies did to Ali, Joe Frazier, Arturo Gatti, and Micky Ward. Better that Pacquiao focus the few good efforts he has left in him on the lightweight ranks and maybe beyond.

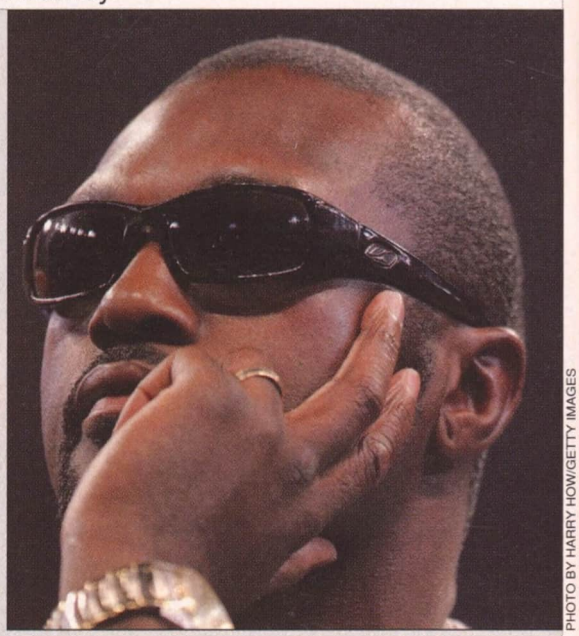
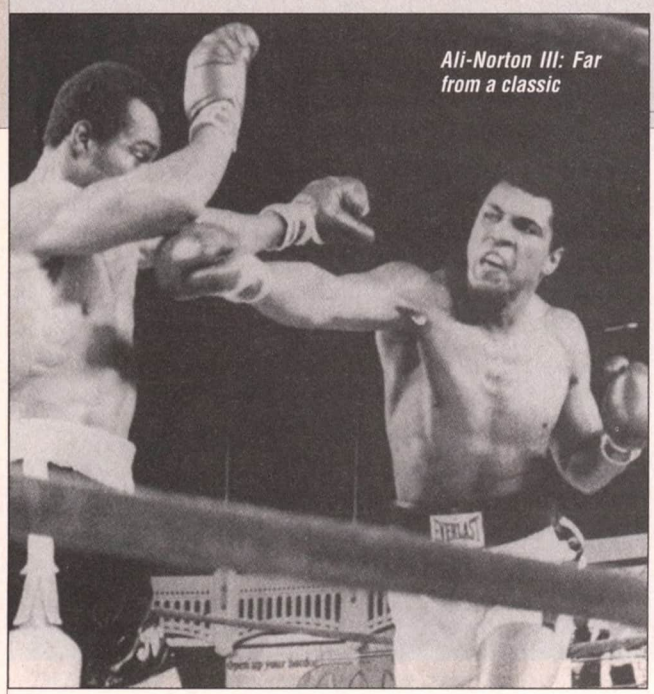


PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Forbes: Too friendly to foe?

•In this, the final season of Yankee Stadium's existence, tributes are pouring in from athletes, writers, celebrities, fans, and anyone else who ever had the thrill of visiting the Mecca at 161st Street and River Avenue. And no matter if it's in print, on sportstalk radio, or during a TV special, boxing history is being conveniently rewritten. Ali-Ken Norton III, the only main event to play the ballpark following its mid-'70s renovation, is now being recalled as a classic. Excuse me, but you'd have a tough time finding anybody who didn't think the bout was a dud. A disputed decision only enhanced the stench hanging in the Bronx air that night.

•In light of the Putnam controversy, this might not be the best time to tell you all about my miraculous escape from the wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*. Perhaps next month.

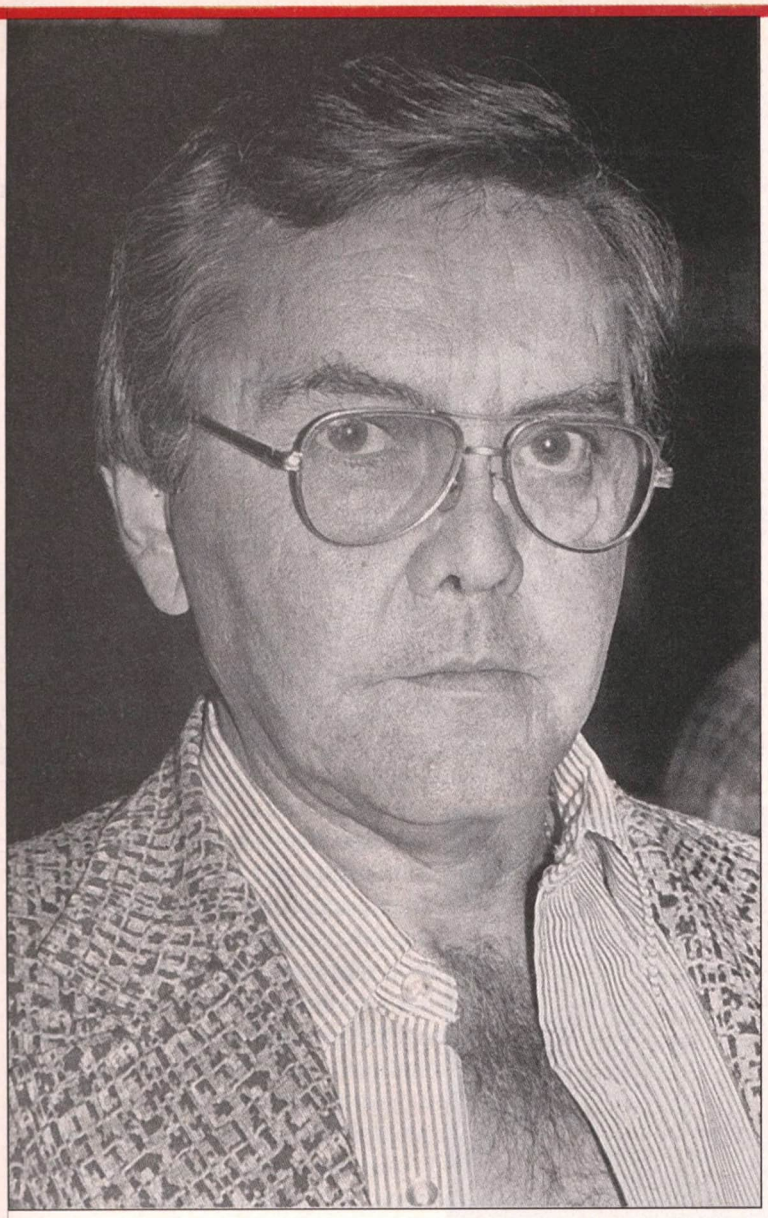


Ali-Norton III: Far from a classic

or whatever they happen to be calling two ill-humored guys attacking each other in a cage this week. Maybe MMA, or my appreciation of it, would have changed since my last column blasting it several years ago.

Well, my curiosity led me to telecasts on Showtime and Spike and a tape given to me by a friend. And, admittedly, after watching about a dozen or so bouts, my opinion of MMA *has* changed: It's even more inferior to boxing than I'd previously thought.

(A side note: Attention, all you muscle-heads. There's no need to flood the magazine with nasty letters, as you always do when someone has the nerve to criticize your beloved cage combat. Especially tiresome is the, "Oh yeah, Ryan, well, you're just whining because you know you wouldn't last five seconds with these guys before tapping out and crying for your mommy." Maybe so, but I don't claim to be a tough guy. I claim to be a sportswriter. And



Truth tarnishes Putnam's reputation

trust me, all you Creatine cretins, if there was something called the Ultimate Writing Championship and you were alone in a cage with a computer keyboard, a thesaurus, and your own intelligence, you'd be tapping out and crying for your mommies halfway through your first attempt at a coherent sentence.)

My problem with MMA is that the exciting bouts are over in a flash, while anything that lasts a few rounds is about as thrilling as a night of trying on jeans at the mall. In most of the bouts yours truly watched recently, and through the years, the first solid punch usually sends the recipient to the deck. Once down, a) the guy is finished off in seconds, or b) an extended ground war lasting nearly as long as the Iraqi conflict ensues. The two combatants jockey for leverage, nobody can free his arms, and nothing much happens for what seems like eons. It's kind of like a bad hockey fight minus the Toronto Maple Leafs jersey yanked over one guy's head.

For a sport that touts itself as the toughest of the tough, there sure are a lot of quick submissions. Not just from chokeholds, but from flurries of punches. Where is the equivalent of boxers gritting it out for several rounds with broken jaws or noses, gashed eyes, or fractured hands? Sorry, MMA fanatics, but your heroes don't measure up to the pugilists I've covered for the past quarter of a century. Too much quit, not enough grit, and so much glass in the jaws that we're afraid someone might go down from the high notes in the National Anthem.

Pat-Ently Offensive: The best news for boxing aficionados—at least since the advent of ESPN Classic—has to be the announcement that SI.com, the *Sports Illustrated* website, has made all of the stories in its 54-year history available to the public free of charge. That's right, click on the "archives" page, and you can call up a treasure chest of boxing articles written by the likes of Frank Deford, Mark Kram, Franz Lidz, William Nack, and, of course, the late Pat Putnam. If your every visit to the site doesn't last at least an hour, you're not half the fight fan you think you are.

Putnam's work is of particular interest to me because he was *SI*'s main fight scribe when my career was in its infancy, and he was the only one of the aforementioned writers I've ever spoken with. So it was disturbing to learn in May that Putnam's name was being removed from the award the Boxing Writers Association of America bestows annually on the fight figure who displays perseverance in the face of adversity, a quality many had thought Putnam epitomized years before he ever filed copy from ringside.

Recently, though, various sources discovered that Putnam's claims of having been a Marine in the Korean War, a POW in Indochina for 17 months, a four-time winner of the Purple Heart, and a recipient of the Navy Cross, were false. Not only was Putnam not a war hero, according to military records he never served in *any* branch of the service.

Putnam's daughter, Colleen, told ABCNews.com that her father was a drinker, and that he may have "yarned" such a story. Those who knew Putnam well speculate that the war story was probably a drunken tall tale that got away from him and took on a life of its own. Whatever the explanation, Putnam's deceit left many in the boxing community feeling betrayed. But it doesn't change the words that he typed in pressrooms and hotel suites in Las Vegas and Atlantic City, London, and New York. His fight stories remain some of the best *SI* has ever printed.

But don't listen to me. Click on SI.com and judge for yourself. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Box With Roy Jones? Smarter To Stay In Your Cage

Trying to pit the best pit cage fighters and boxers against each other is like throwing a great white shark in against a grizzly bear. Whoever chooses the turf wins. That's why cage-fighting impresario Dana White stepped in to prevent mixed martial arts star Anderson Silva from boxing Roy Jones.

Had Jones-Silva taken place, I expect Jones would have scored an early kayo, and clearly, White harbored the same suspicion, which is why he put the kibosh on the idea. But Jones praised Silva for his courage and willingness to step into Jones' domain, and it's impossible to disagree with that sentiment.

As I've pointed out in earlier columns, cage fighting is a dumbed down spectacle cynically aimed at the same people who—no matter what their diplomas might claim—still can't find Iraq on a map.

But the fighters themselves are gutsy individuals trying to make a buck in a tough racket. Besides, who among us hasn't swallowed pride and knuckled under to an unfair teacher, a demon coach, or a boss from hell? In this case, the unfair boss is the crowd of dimwitted, bloodthirsty fanatics hoping to see somebody get his elbow bent the wrong way or his face kicked into stewed tomatoes.

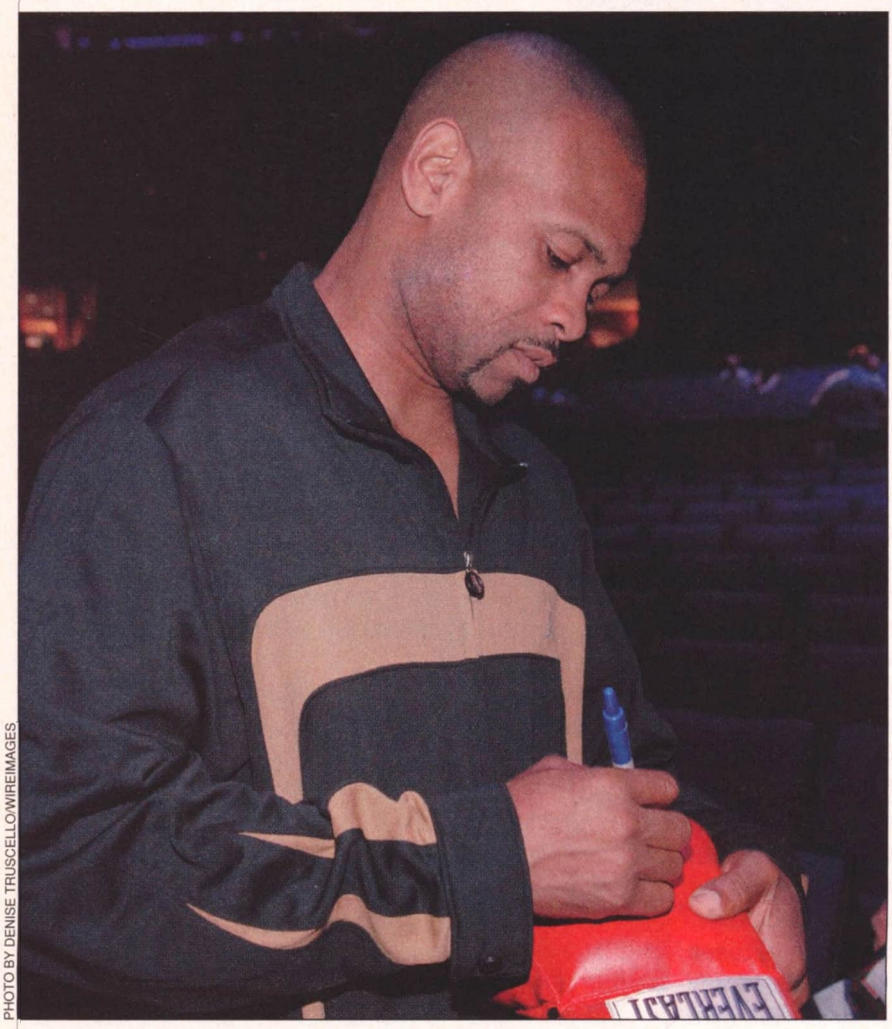


PHOTO BY DENISE TRUSCELLO/WIREIMAGES

Jones can do a lot more with gloves than sign them

It's odd to see the brutal Sweet Science come off as relatively civilized, but that's what happens when you line it up against cage fighting, where the ref will let a fighter rain down punches while sitting on his opponent's chest.

If boxing were a revenge scenario, it would be *Hamlet*—a timeless, fascinating work of art loaded with sweet intricacy—run at 200 times regular speed. Cage fighting is more like a *Rambo* movie. All *Rambo* movies have two parts: Very bad people do something very bad to Rambo or to good people he likes. In Part Two, Rambo settles the bad people's hash. You don't have to think or know anything to get it. In fact, the less you think and know, the more you can enjoy it.

Silva wouldn't have been the first athlete from another sport who thought he could beat a boxer at his own game. But at the top levels of big-time sports, dilettantes, no matter how talented they are on their own playground, stand little chance. That was pretty much proved when Michael Jordan, perhaps the greatest athlete of this era, couldn't

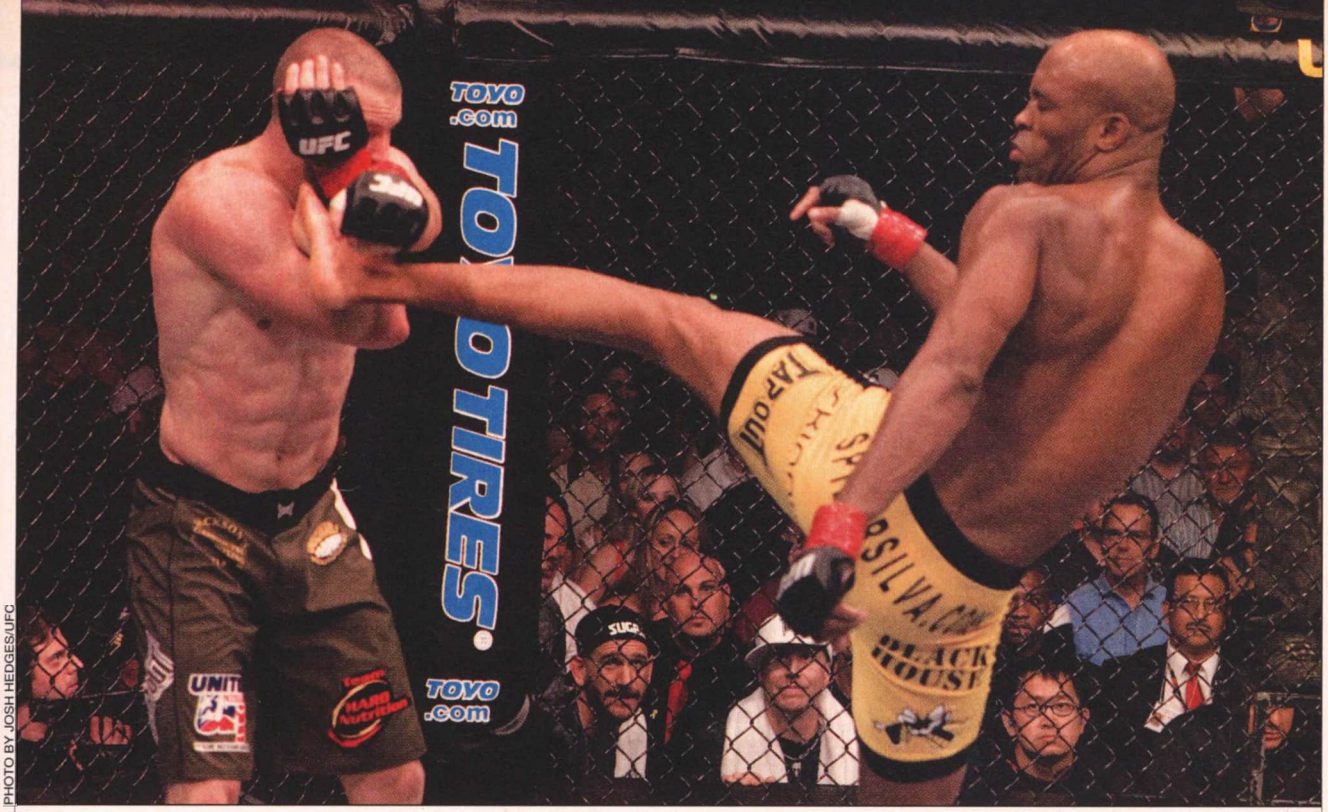


PHOTO BY JOSH HEDGES/UFC

Silva wouldn't have had the opportunity to do this to Jones

hack it against minor-league baseball pitchers. And that's why, after Muhammad Ali slapped him around a little on a London street, Wilt Chamberlain stopped bragging that he could beat The Greatest at his own game.

What cage fighters share with boxers is enormous raw courage in quantities other sports don't demand. That doesn't mean baseball players, for example, aren't courageous. But even though they stand in the box with a big guy throwing 95 mph fastballs past their heads, they still don't have to be as brave as prizefighters who look right into another man's eyes and know even the slightest mistake can result in painful, split-second retribution. Football and hockey players aren't playing tiddlywinks out there either, but it's impossible to know how many of them would be willing, for example, to stand up to what Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez have in their dogged pursuit of victory.

Because of the courage component, it's not easy to predict how other athletes might have fared had they gone into boxing instead. Figuring out how much prizefighters might have accomplished in other sports is easier. Muhammad Ali, for example, could have been one of the greatest middle linebackers ever. And Sugar Ray Leonard? He could have made shortstop history. Basketball, thanks to the freaky height requirements, poses a tougher challenge. But stretch Lennox Lewis out a few more inches and he could have played center in the NBA without breaking a sweat.

Around the time Silva was ordered to back off from Jones, I received a routine summary from the California Athletic Commission about a Showtime cage fighting card held last spring in San Jose, California. The thing about commission statistics is they don't lie. The state takes an exact count of the gate for tax purposes, and the card headlined by Cung Le and Frank Shamrock drew 14,170 paying customers who shelled out $1.1-million for seats. Winner Le earned $200,000 and Shamrock $300,000.

Chamberlain eventually abandoned thoughts of boxing

Sure, we've seen bigger crowds and fatter purses in boxing, but those are very decent numbers, and plenty of boxing promoters and top-level fighters would settle for them. I can't help thinking that all those young fans in San Jose should have been boxing fans, but boxing didn't know how to get their attention. If they'd just give speeded-up *Hamlet* a chance, they might never settle for insipid *Rambo* again. Those fans should be on our side. Does that mean I have to stop insulting them? Maybe next time.

Showtime Dollars: You know those dollars we shove in Showtime's direction so we can see its boxing cards? Some of them went to Leslie Moonves, chief executive officer of CBS (which owns Showtime). Moonves made off with a 28 percent hike in compensation in 2007, earning $36.8-million. During the same 12 months, his company's earnings dropped 25 percent. Plenty of CEOs of much larger corporations putting up much better numbers earned less than Moonves. But in his favor, 2007 was also the year Showtime presented us two Vazquez-Marquez contests.

Quote Of The Month: "At the moment, it's weak." British sensation Amir Khan assessing the lightweight division. Evidently, between bouts they confine Khan in a dark room without access to Manny Pacquiao tapes.

"Executioner" Didn't Execute: Bernard Hopkins, who promises us fireworks before each and every fight, appears to pattern his behavior after Lucy in the Peanuts strip, who always guaranteed Charlie Brown that this time she'd let him kick the football. After knocking down Joe Calzaghe in the first round with a sensationally sneaky right hand, Hopkins backed up so much you'd have thought Calzaghe was carrying a contagious disease. The next 11 ½ rounds of Hopkins' stick-and-grab tedium was about as exciting as an IRS form.

Calzaghe once again sacrificed power to build up the volume of his punches, but at least he went into the fight looking for a fight, not a dirty dance. Who cares if Hopkins can or cannot eke out a victory with those tactics? If HBO books any more of his contests, HBO deserves what it gets.

China Syndrome: Greedy Olympic officials jettisoned what was left of their integrity when they awarded the 2008 Games to a vicious dictatorship that's been so needlessly cruel to Tibetans and whose host city is shrouded in thick, poisonous smog. To the officials, this is all about the money. Therefore, consumers should pressure corporations that pay big bucks for official sponsorships to demand those officials make human rights an important criterion when they choose future host cities. This year NBC is promising

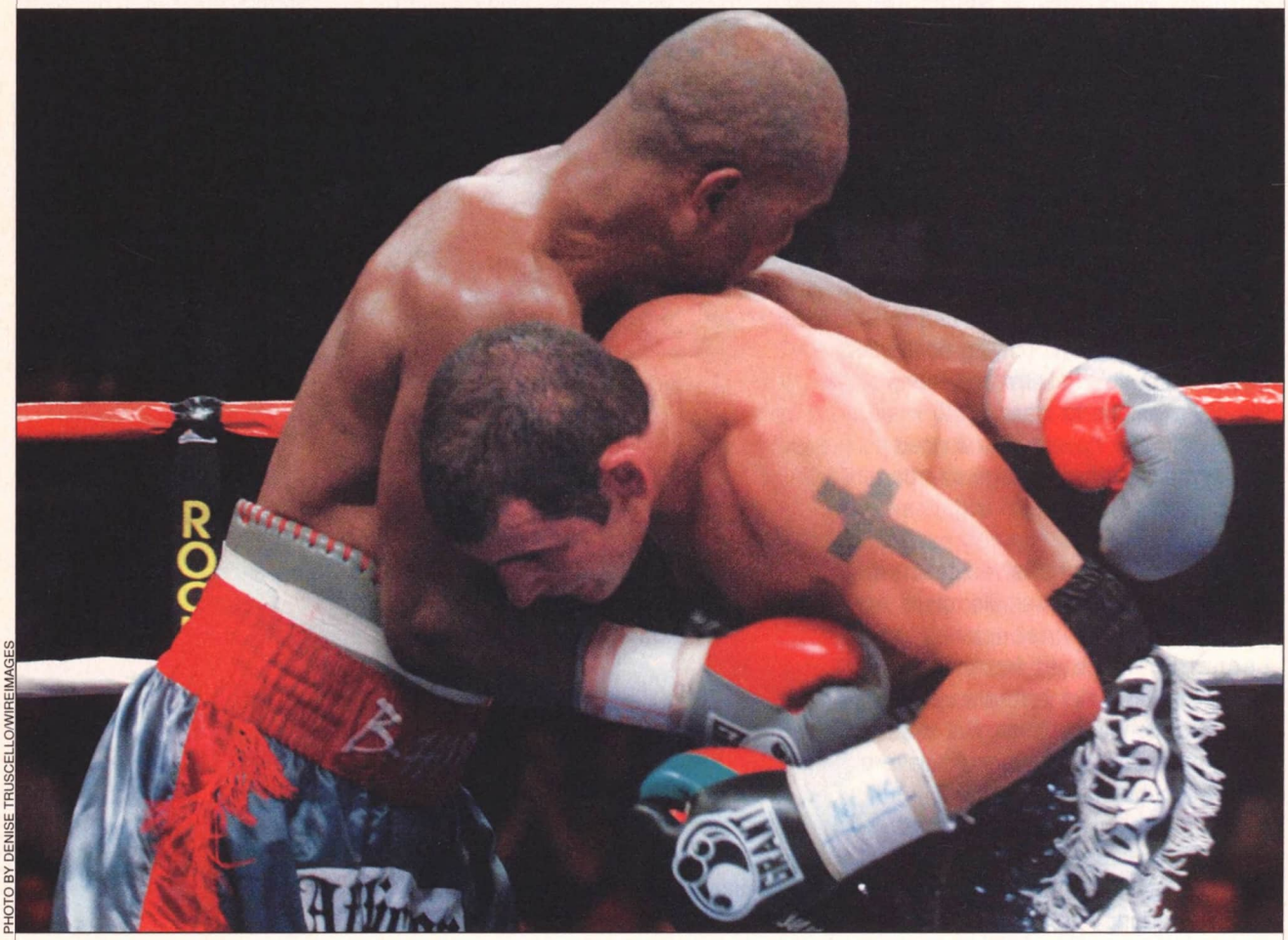


PHOTO BY DENISE TRUSCELLO/WIREIMAGES

Does anybody want to see more of this?

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Cintron has to believe in himself to bounce back

to provide an active Internet portal at www.nbcolympics.com where fans should be able to find video coverage of boxing events not covered in the regular broadcast.

Back To Work, Kermit: Okay, so now we know for sure Kermit Cintron can't beat Antonio Margarito. He has plenty of company. Besides, sometimes even the best of fighters hit a wall against particular opponents. Twice De La Hoya was unable to score a victory over Shane Mosley, Mosley couldn't get it done against Vernon Forrest twice or Winky Wright (twice again), and Ricardo Mayorga had Forrest's number in both of their bouts. But both De La Hoya and Mosley went on to prevail in other big-time fights, and Forrest also looks set to soar again. Crowd-pleasing Cintron can beat plenty of welterweights. But first he must believe it.

De La Hoya-Forbes Notes: Yes, tickets were priced down to $25, but the cheapest parking was $20 ... A retired Marine sergeant major (Hispanic) once asked me why any Mexican-American like De La Hoya would insist on hearing the Mexican National Anthem before a fight, and I had no answer for him. It wasn't Mexico where Oscar achieved his fantastic success. As a side note, the unique cross-chest salute for the Mexican anthem is very cool ... It was amazing to see 27,000 fans come out for a bout they could have seen on HBO ... You have to hand it to Golden Boy Promotions for its business acumen and to both fighters, who poured plenty of intelligent aggression into 12 rounds. I don't know where the next star of Oscar's magnitude will come from, but he better show up fast. ■

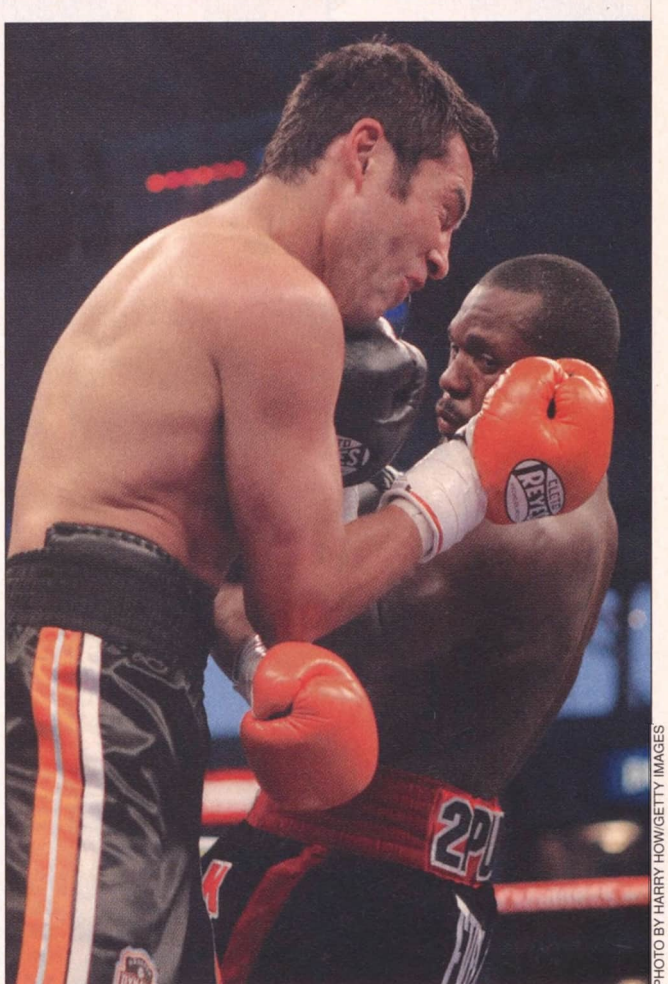


PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Forbes catches De La Hoya with an uppercut

[Camera Clicks]

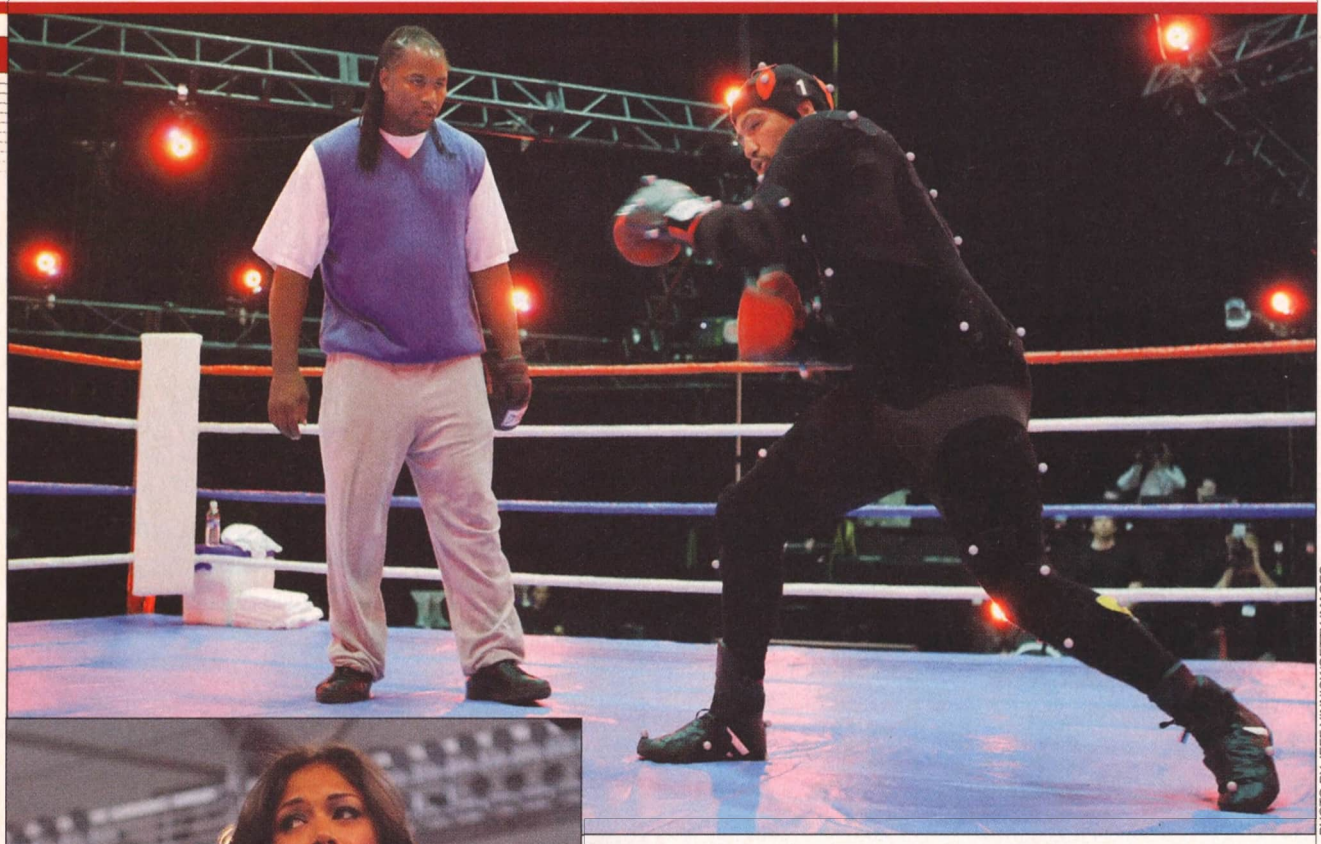


PHOTO BY JEFF VINNICK/GETTY IMAGES

Been wondering where Winky Wright has been lately? Maybe you've been asking the wrong question, as it's not a matter of where he's been, but when he's been, since this photo clearly shows he's traveled to the future (where Lennox Lewis sports the fashion trend of the future, the sweater vest/sweatpants combo). In actuality, Lennox and Winky were recently in Burnaby, British Columbia, working with EA Sports on the Fight Night 4 video game, with Wright wearing a "motion capture" suit.

PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Oh, say, can we see ... more of Nicole Scherzinger? The Pussycat Doll performed the national anthem prior to the Oscar De La Hoya-Steve Forbes fight, and frankly, she could have missed every single note and nobody would have minded.

Everybody loves a good sportsmanlike embrace after a fight, but Frankie Figueroa may have taken it a little too far following his 12-round unanimous decision win over Luis Rodriguez in May. Chants of "Frank-ie! Frank-ie!" quickly gave way to chants of "Get-a-room! Get-a-room!" as Figueroa showed his affection for the man he'd just defeated.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

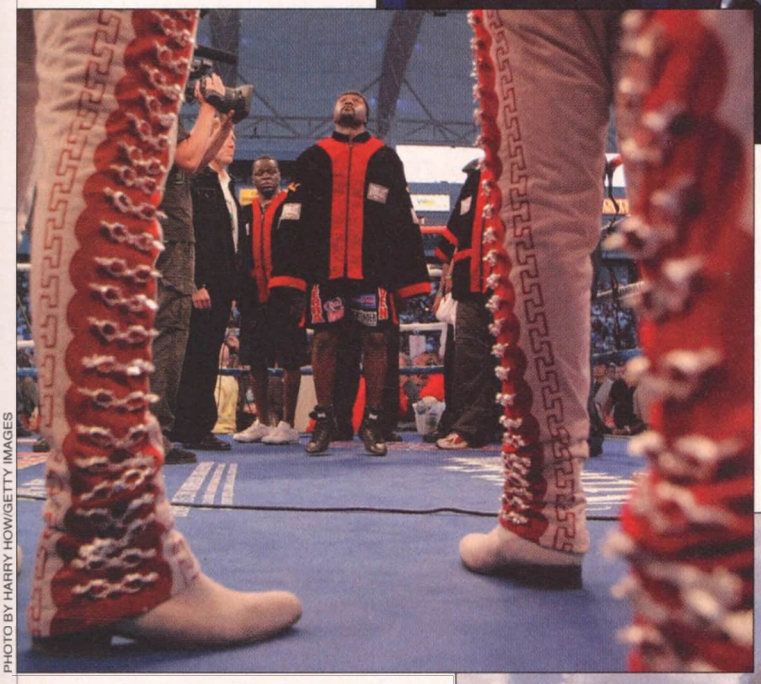


PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

What's Germany-based Armenian fighter Susi Kentikian doing posing for photos in Moscow two weeks prior to a fight in Germany against an opponent from Missouri? Beats the heck out of us. Speaking of "beats the heck out of," that's precisely what Kentikian did to Mary Ortega on May 10, dispatching the American in just 1:53 to raise her record to 21-0 (16).

Consider this a Mariachi midget's eye view of Steve Forbes prior to his fight May 3 against Oscar De La Hoya. From this angle, Forbes looks positively towering, more like "Two Ton" than "Two Pounds," but in actuality, he gave up three inches in height to De La Hoya, one of the many factors working against him as he lost a convincing decision to "The Golden Boy."

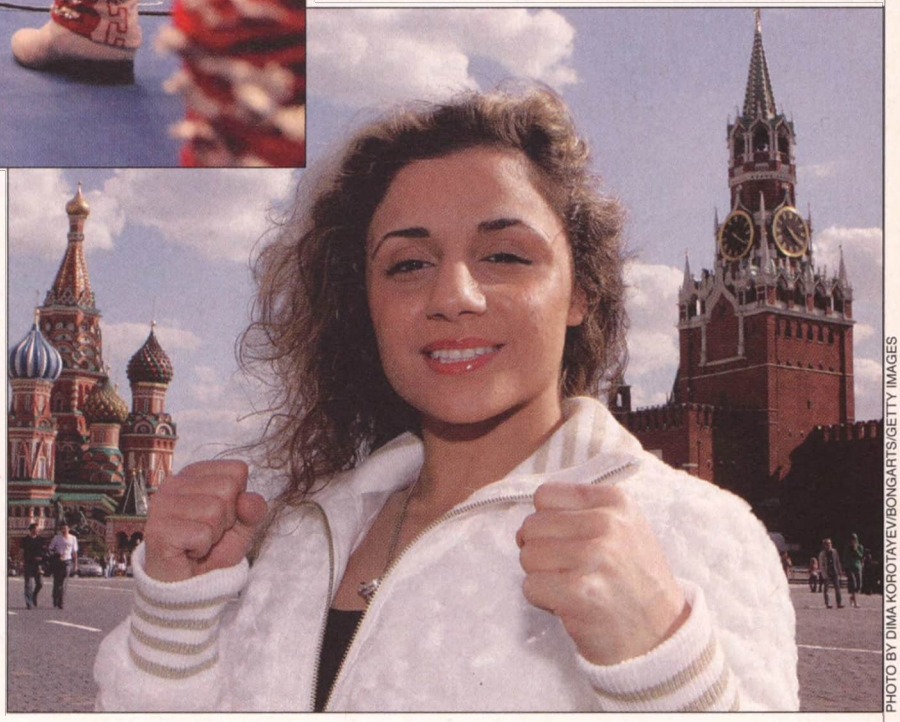


PHOTO BY DIMA KOROTAYEV/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

By Walter Villa

PHOTOS BY CENTENO JAVIEL/FIGHTWIRES IMAGES

Yan Barthelemy Bantamweight

Yan Barthelemy arrives at Miami Fight gym in a black Cadillac Escalade, a car that would drop jaws in his native Cuba. He exits the vehicle to reveal gold on each earlobe, another luxury unheard of back home. But things are different now for the 2004 Olympic gold medalist. He is considered a traitor by the Cuban government, an enemy of the state, a man who abandoned his people.

Even so, Barthelemy still has love for "*la isla,*" the island where his entire family still lives. In fact, when he won his gold medal in Athens, he said he had a supernatural experience.

"To win that for Cuba," Barthelemy said in Spanish, "I felt like my hands touched heaven."

Two years later, his feet finally landed on free soil.

And two years after that, he is 6-0 as a pro—all by decision—and appears on his way toward what he and others feel is a certain future as a junior bantamweight world champion.

But before we learn where Barthelemy is going, it is important to know where he came from.

Born 28 years ago in the Arroyo Naranjo section of Havana, he wasn't much of an athlete as a boy. He tried basketball, but was too small. He tried baseball—Cuba's national pastime—but discovered another problem.

"I was terrible," said the 5'7" Barthelemy. "They put me in the outfield because there was no other option."

Pro Record

2007		
April 27	Ravil Mukhamadiarov, Hamburg, Germany	W 4
June 16	Gennadiy Delisandru, Ankara, Turkey	W 4
Oct. 30	Kevin Hudgins, Hollywood, FL	W 4
Dec. 7	Luis Rios, Miami, FL	W 6
2008		
Feb. 22	Antonio Diaz, Fort Lauderdale, FL	W 6
April 12	Jose Garcia Bernal, Tampa, FL	W 6

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
6	6	0	0	0

At 11, he followed some friends to a gym, where a coach—the late Luis Diaz—put gloves on him and shoved him in the ring.

"Pah! I knocked the guy out," said Barthelemy, with a devilish laugh. "I loved the feeling of that first knockout."

There would be many more big shots in the years to come, but it was all because Diaz found out where he lived. The next day, Diaz visited Yan's mother and asked her to let him box.

"She was against it," Barthelemy said. "Typical reaction of a mom. She thought it would make me ugly, make me stupid. But I convinced her."

Good thing too. Barthelemy went 107-14 as an amateur, winning gold medals at the '01 World Amateur Championships, in Belfast, Ireland, and the '03 Pan Am Games, in Santo Domingo.

But after returning from the Olympics, he and two gold medalists—featherweight Yuriorkis Gamboa and heavyweight Odlanier Solis—quickly became disillusioned with the Cuban government.

They felt their accomplishments would earn them a better life. Instead, they continued to live in poverty. Gamboa, in fact, felt forced to sell his Olympic medal in order to provide a birthday party for his young daughter (Barthelemy's medals are still with his family in Cuba).

On December 11, 2006, while training in Venezuela for the Pan American Games, the trio's dissatisfaction with the Cuban government reached a boiling point. At about 10:30 p.m., they quietly walked out of their hotel rooms with just the clothes they had on—no suitcases—and met with a Venezuelan friend who drove them to the border and into Colombia.

Now officially defectors, they spent four months in hiding to make sure that the Cuban government would not capture them and send them back to the island.

"I wasn't scared," Barthelemy said. "In my business, you can't be scared."

Barthelemy said his family, his parents, two younger brothers and two younger sisters, all of whom still live in Cuba,

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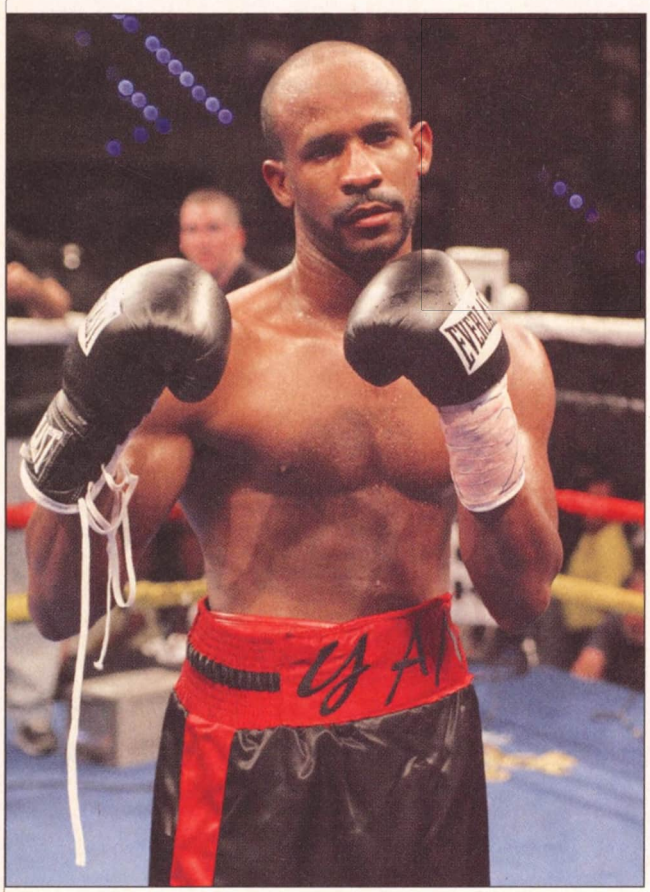

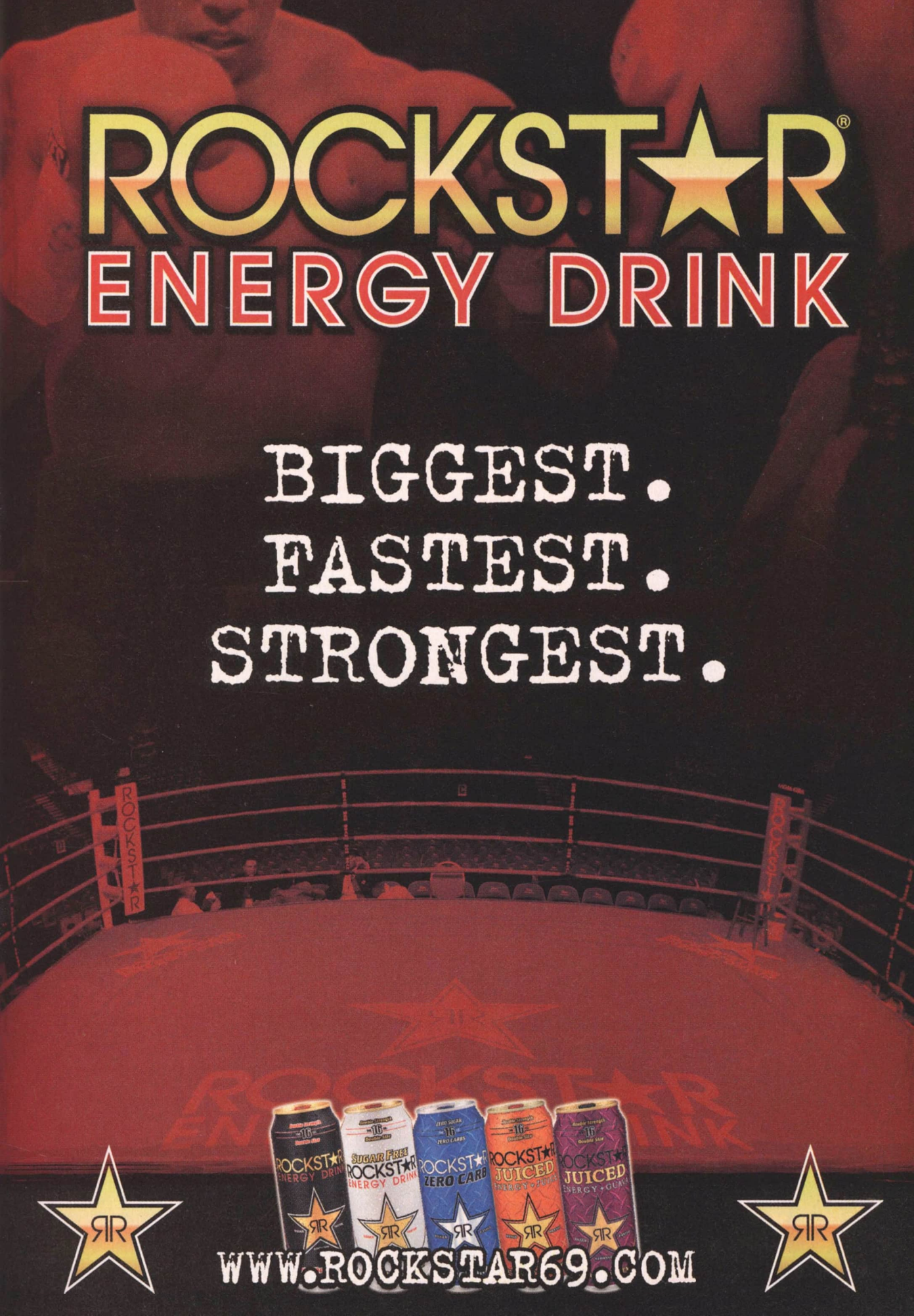
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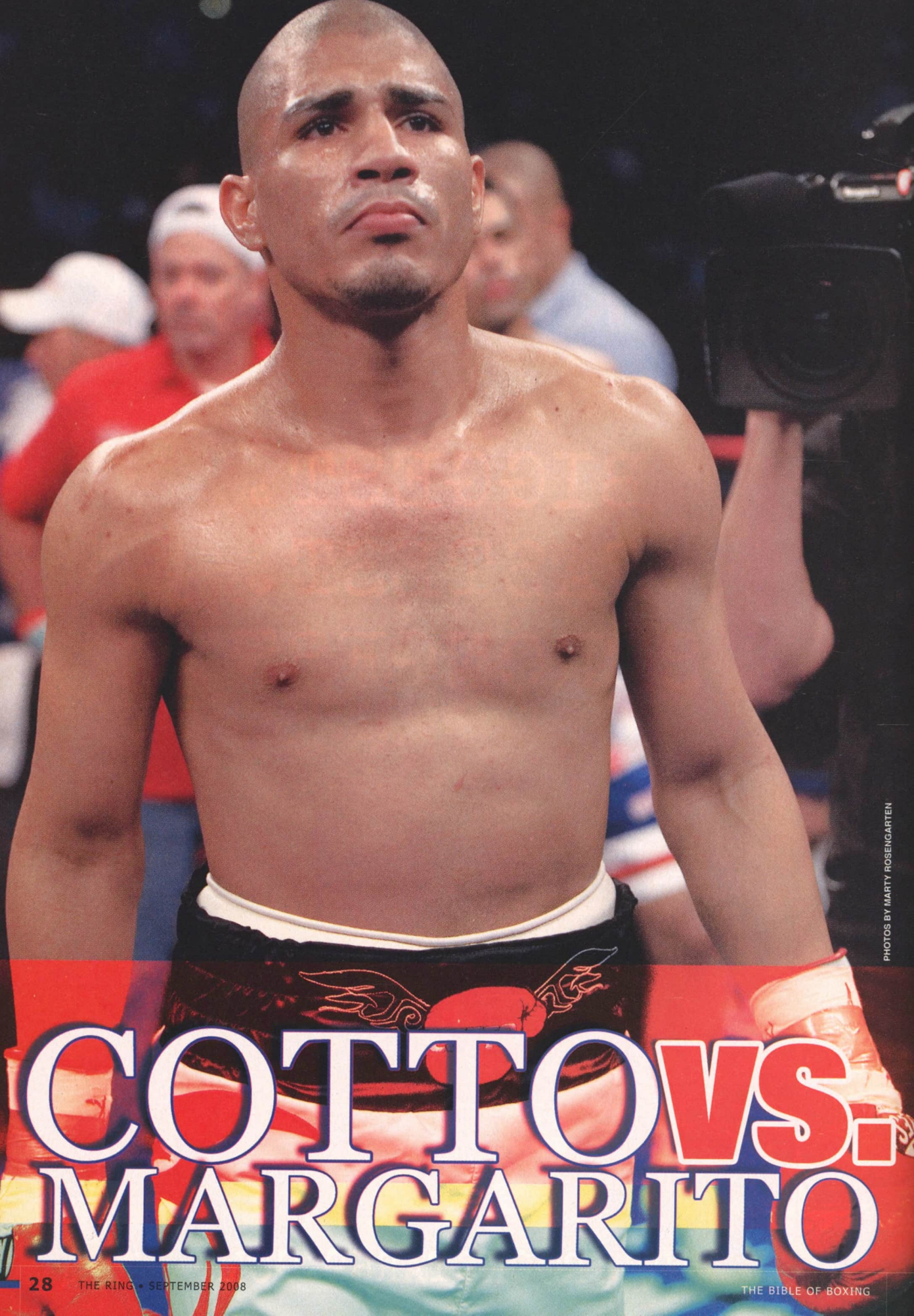
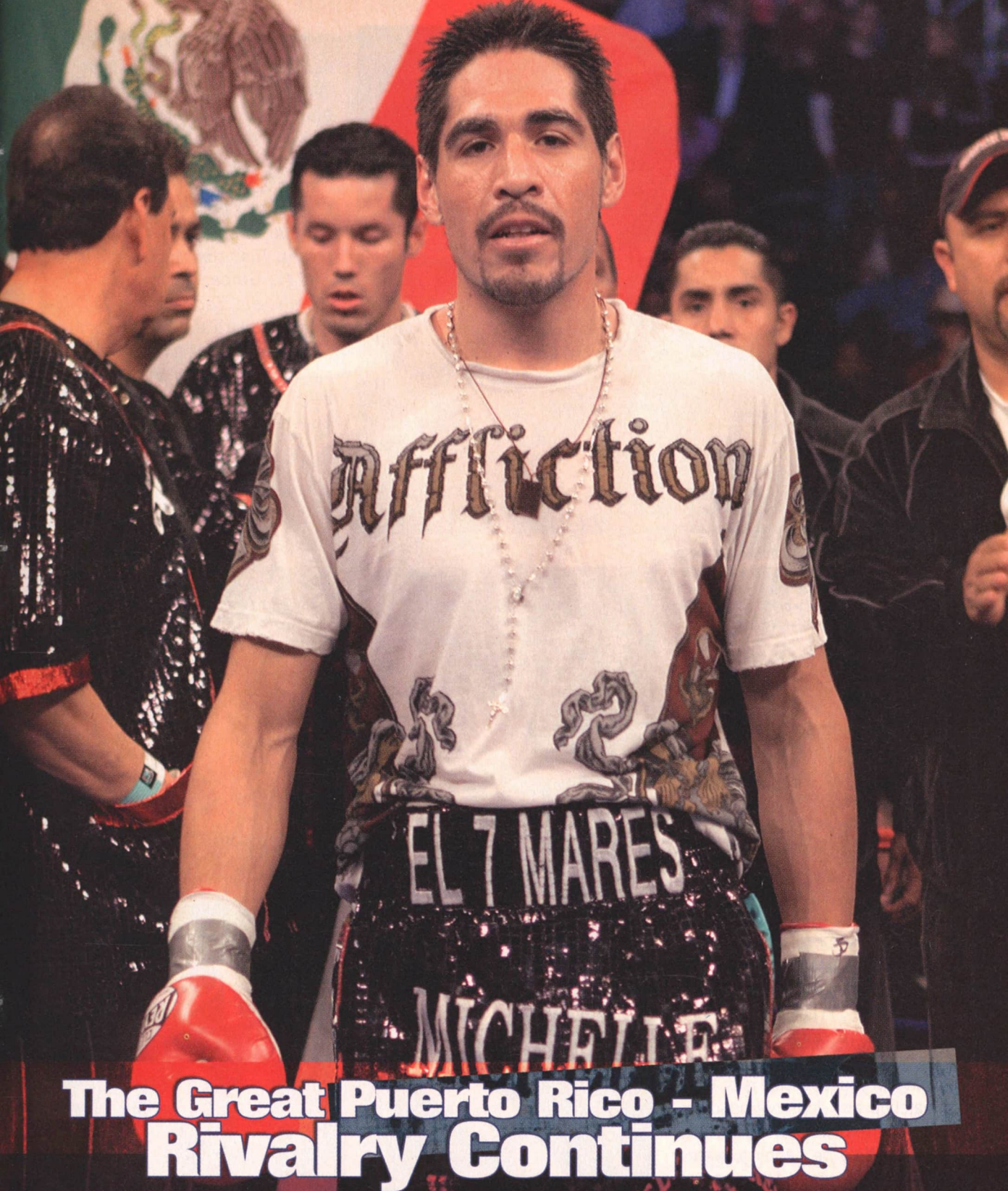


COTTO vs. MARGARITO

PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN



The Great Puerto Rico - Mexico Rivalry Continues

By William Dettloff

"The Mexican people will never forgive me if I lose. They will lynch me if I lose. I couldn't return to Mexico."

—Mexican icon Julio Cesar Chavez before his fight with Puerto Rican star Hector Camacho in September 1992

In the days before his win over Kermit Cintron in April, welterweight contender Antonio Margarito thrilled his Mexican fans when he predicted that after relieving Cintron of his alphabet title, he would do the same to the other Puerto Rican welterweight titlists, namely Cotto

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Cotto punishes overmatched Alfonso Gomez en route to a fourth-round TKO in Atlantic City. It was a relatively easy fight for the undefeated Puerto Rican, who deserved a bit of a breather after taking on Zab Judah and Shane Mosley, back-to-back.

October 28, 1978: Thunderous-punching, undefeated WBC super bantamweight titleholder Wilfredo Gomez, product of the slums of San Juan, defends the title against WBC bantamweight titleholder and Mexican icon Carlos Zarate at a packed Roberto Clemente Coliseum. They are 22 and 26 years old, respectively: in their primes. Their combined record is 75-0-1 (74). Gomez wins the first two rounds, but Zarate takes the third. Gomez drops Zarate in the fourth with a counter left hook and then again with a right. After another knockdown in the fifth, referee Harry Gibbs stops it. The Coliseum explodes.

A look at Margarito's 36-5 (26) record tells us he is no stranger to this rivalry. Two of his worst nights in the ring came against Puerto Rican stylist and Carlos Quintana. Of course, on the same night and in the same ring in which Margarito stopped Cintron again, Cotto held up his part of the bargain by, not unexpectedly, blasting out Alfonso Gomez, who, as it happens, is Mexican.

And so continues the long rivalry that exists between Mexican and Puerto Rican prizefighters, in this iteration abetted by welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather, who, by refusing to face either Margarito or Cotto, has compelled them to fight one another. As of press time, the fight was scheduled for July 26 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Not that we're complaining. Cotto and Margarito (or Margarito and Cotto, depending on your ethnicity) is one hell of a matchup and does not need the Puerto Rican-Mexican thing to help build it up. We'd be happy to watch these two if they were a Dane and an Albanian or an Indian and a Pole. Doesn't matter to us. A great fight is a great fight and these two have the styles and the temperament to produce a memorable battle. But given the history of this rivalry and the quality of the fights it has produced, you can't help but to expect even more.

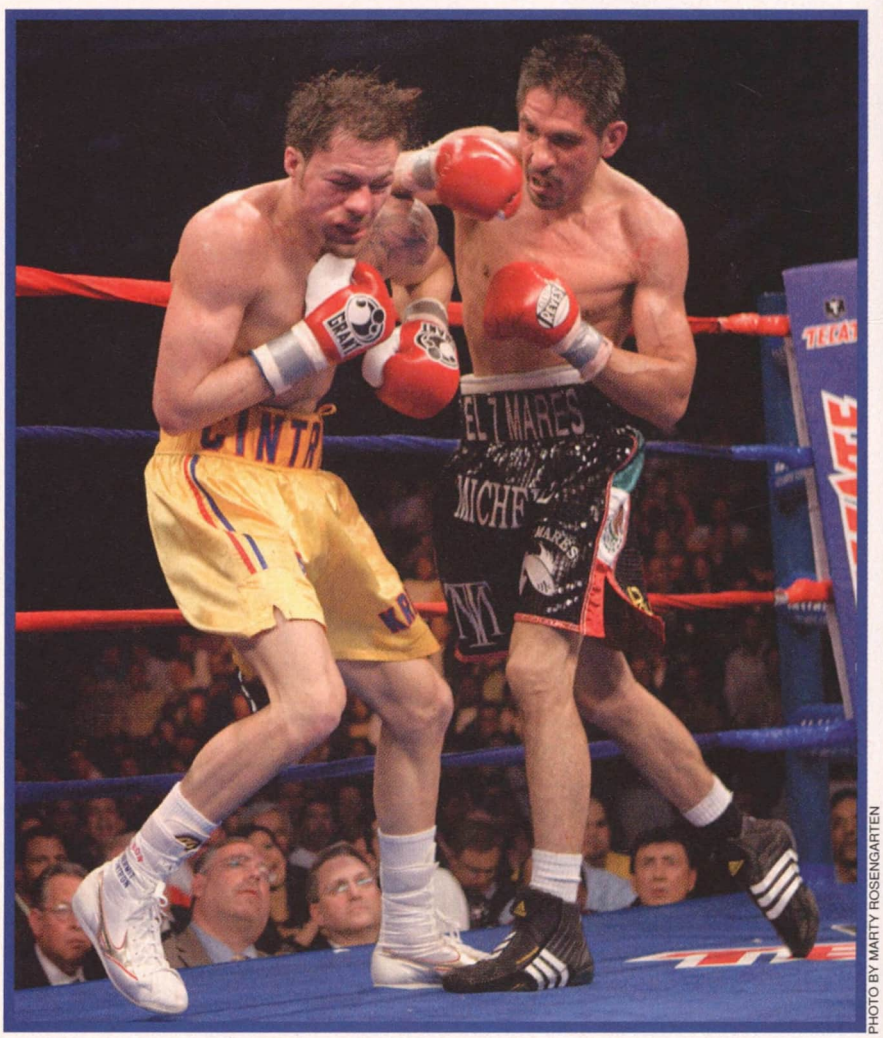
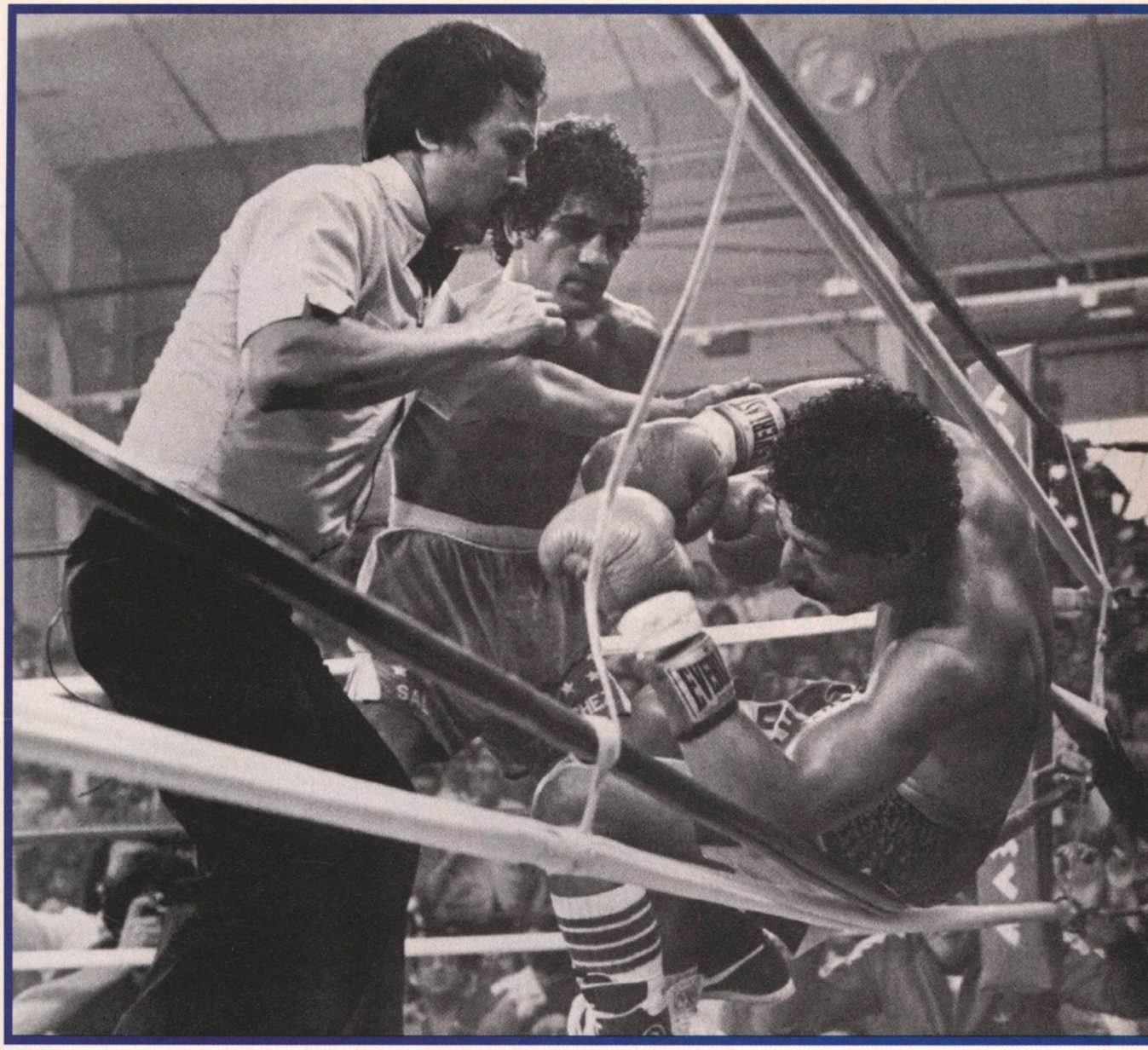


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

In his final bout before taking on Cotto, Margarito brutalized Kermit Cintron, a Puerto Rican living in Pennsylvania, for a sixth-round knockout on the Cotto-Gomez card in Atlantic City. What is more, the Mexican tough guy walked through Cintron's best shots to do so.



The historic rivalry between Mexican and Puerto Rican fighters includes many bouts between future Hall of Famers, as was the case when WBC featherweight titleholder Salvador Sanchez knocked out Wilfredo Gomez in August 1981.

Daniel Santos. Their first fight, held in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, in July 2001, was called a no-contest when a headbutt opened Margarito's eye in the first round and the fight was stopped. In the rematch three years later, in Hato Rey, Margarito was getting outboxed when their heads collided again, producing another fight-ending cut. Santos, ahead on the cards, got the technical decision win.

Cotto's 32-0 (26) record, in contrast, is largely void of the better Mexican fighters, especially for one so experienced as he. His most notable recent wins have come against Americans—Shane Mosley, Zab Judah, Paulie Malignaggi, et al. The only accomplished Mexican on his resume is former WBC lightweight titleholder Cesar Bazan, whom he battered in 11 rounds way back in '03, as a junior welterweight. Bazan, never a very special fighter to begin with, was already on his way down. In Margarito, Cotto will find a strong, unyielding opponent who, at 30 years old, is at or around his prime.

August 21, 1981: Gomez, still undefeated, rises in weight to challenge the technically brilliant WBC featherweight titleholder Salvador Sanchez of Santiago Tianguistenco, Mexico. He is a prohibitive betting favorite. Before the fight, he says he will die in the ring before he lets Sanchez beat him. He almost does. Sanchez drops him in the first round, then, to the shock of the thousands in attendance at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, he breaks Gomez' cheekbone and batters him all over the ring before Carlos Padilla stops it in the eighth, just as Sanchez is driving Gomez through the ropes.

For his part, Cotto has, thus far, chosen not to engage in talk about the rivalry that exists between Puerto

Rican and Mexican fighters. In reply to Margarito's shot at the other Puerto Rican titlists, Cotto told the Puerto Rican daily newspaper, *El Nuevo Dia*, that Margarito should take care of first things first.

"Instead of talking about me, Antonio Margarito should focus on his next fight against Kermit Cintron," Cotto said. But that's him. He is not a talker, even by the standards set by other important Puerto Rican fighters, such as Felix Trinidad. Trinidad always preferred to let his talking be done in the ring, like all the great Puerto Ricans (save Hector Camacho).

Cotto is even less forthcoming than that. By all accounts, he is as introverted and private off camera as he is on, and primarily for this reason: He has not been as heartily embraced by the little island, as was Trinidad, who actively sought the adoration of his compatriots. In this sense, he is not terribly unlike Margarito, who, in terms of his status among contemporary Mexican fighters, is several rungs below Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales and even Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. Watch that to change, for one of them, in July.

December 3, 1982: Defending the WBC super bantamweight title, Gomez meets WBC bantamweight titleholder Lupe Pintor of Mexico, who had dethroned Zarate. The thousand in attendance at the Superdome in New Orleans are there to see Thomas Hearns and Wilfred Benitez in the main event, but Gomez and Pintor put on a slugfest that overshadows not only Hearns-Benitez, but many fights to come. In a thriller, Gomez wins when referee Arthur Mercante stops it after Pintor is floored twice in the 14th round.

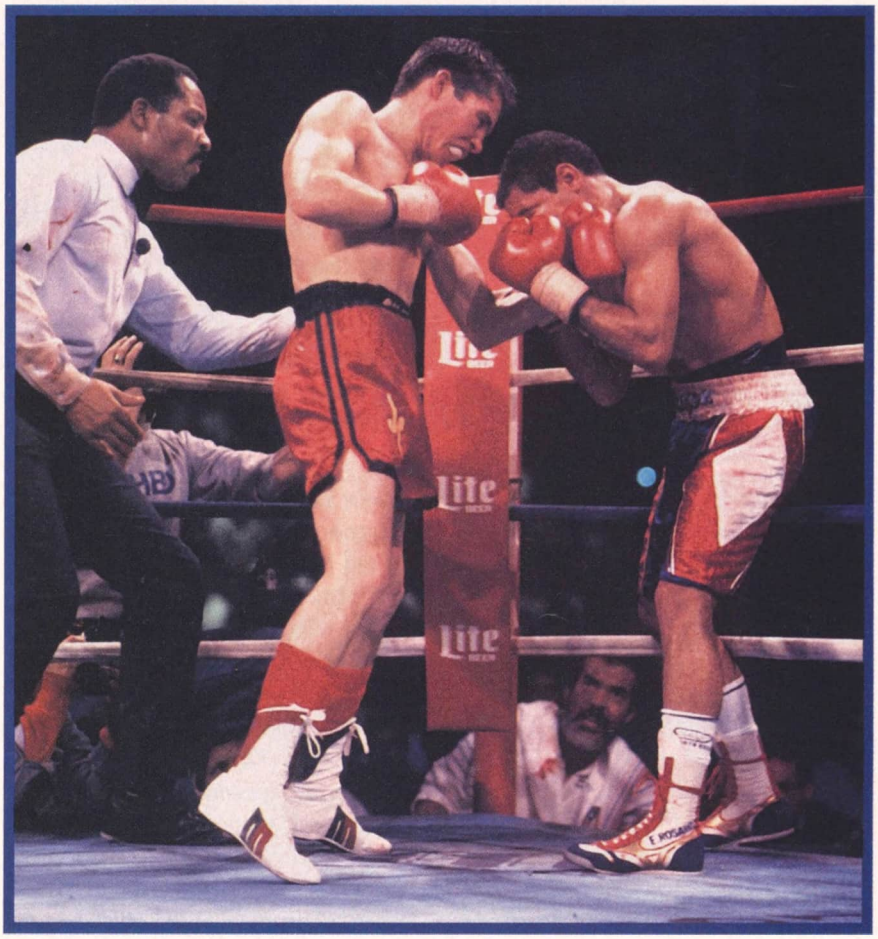
Top Rank publicist Ricardo Jimenez, who works with both Cotto and Margarito, as he has with dozens of other Latino fighters over the years, attributes much of the rivalry to socio-economic disparities between the two cultures.

"It's not exactly jealousy, but Puerto Ricans have the best of two worlds and Mexicans know it," he told THE RING. "They have the Latino culture and everything that's good about that, and also the ways and means of the United States because they're part of the U.S. In Puerto Rico, they can go out and have a good time because they're economically better off. In Mexico, the people just have to work hard all the time. Some Mexicans resent them for it."

Don't tell that to the fighters and other stars who have risen from the worst slums of San Juan (or to Marco Antonio Barrera, who comes from a fairly well-to-do Mexico City family). But Jimenez acknowledges the basic and undeniable human tendency to see others as richer than you are, whether or not it's accurate, and to build a stone resentment against them for it. It doesn't hurt this rivalry that, as entities, both Mexico and Puerto Rico are fervent in their nationalism and love of self. But that cuts both ways.

May 1, 1983: Edwin Rosario, at 20 years old, is a lightweight sensation when he meets tough Mexican veteran Jose Luis Ramirez in Hato Rey for the WBC lightweight title vacated by Alexis Arguello. Boxing smartly, he takes most of the early rounds before fading badly down the stretch and barely holding on for the decision win. They meet again a year later, and Rosario starts quickly, dropping Ramirez in the first and second rounds. Ramirez survives, and in the fourth, hammers Rosario in a corner until Rosario turns away, barely conscious, the lightweight title already on its way to Mexico.

"Puerto Rico never forgave Wilfredo Gomez for losing to Salvador Sanchez," Jorge Perez, veteran boxing writer for *El Nuevo Dia*, told THE RING. "And not because he lost. Puerto Rico forgave Trinidad for losing to Bernard Hopkins because he tried, he did his best. But Gomez didn't train properly. He was four pounds overweight the day before the fight. So the Puerto Rican people never forgave him."



In another Mexico vs. Puerto Rico showdown, Julio Cesar Chavez battered Edwin Rosario into an 11th-round TKO to win the WBA lightweight title in November 1987.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Mosley feels the power of Cotto's left hand during their rousing 12-rounder at Madison Square Garden in November 2007. Cotto won a close but unanimous decision, displaying his boxing skills as much as his punching power.

Like most things that take place in a prize ring, much of the rivalry is about styles, and posturing and pride. Mexican fighters are known worldwide for their toughness and bravery and willingness to walk into the fire of a prizefight without fear or hesitation. It is what makes them who they are. Many see Puerto Rican fighters, conversely, as practitioners of a style that is something less than manly. The recent archetype is Santos, who wouldn't dare have fought Margarito head on, but somehow "cheated" his way to a win in the second match by boxing. The quintessential figure in this stereotype is Hector Camacho.

"That's what's been said," Perez said. "Mexicans say that Puerto Rican fighters tend to run, but that's true of fighters in every country except Mexico. It's true, Puerto Rico has had fighters like Wilfred Benitez and Hector Camacho, but we've also had Felix Trinidad. So it's not like that at all. Puerto Rico has all different kinds of fighters. Puerto Rico loves fighters who can punch *and* who can box."

November 21, 1987: Rosario is in his second incarnation as lightweight titleholder, this time the WBA's version, having flattened rock-chinned Livingstone Bramble to win the belt. He is challenged by undefeated phenom and reigning WBC super featherweight titleholder Julio Cesar Chavez of Culiacan, Mexico. Heavyweight champion Mike Tyson accompanies Rosario into the ring at the Las Vegas Hilton outdoor stadium, and the 8,151 fans chant, "Chapo, Chapo" in approval. It doesn't help Rosario, to whose rescue referee Richard Steele comes at 2:36 of the 11th round to conclude a fight Chavez dominates from the first moment to the last.

Indeed, there are fighters on both sides who have broken the stereotype. Sanchez was a wonderful Mexican technician whose death at the age of 23 in a car crash was received in Mexico as a national tragedy. He was no face-first brawler. Nor is the recent version of Marco Antonio Barrera, who found at the hands of American Junior Jones that sometimes it is better to move and box than it is to roll and hook. But for the most part, Mexican tradition is

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Margarito wasted no time disposing of Golden Johnson, knocking out the Texas veteran in the first round of their scheduled 12-round bout on the Cotto-Mosley card. The hard-punching Mexican has knocked out 26 of his 36 pro victims.

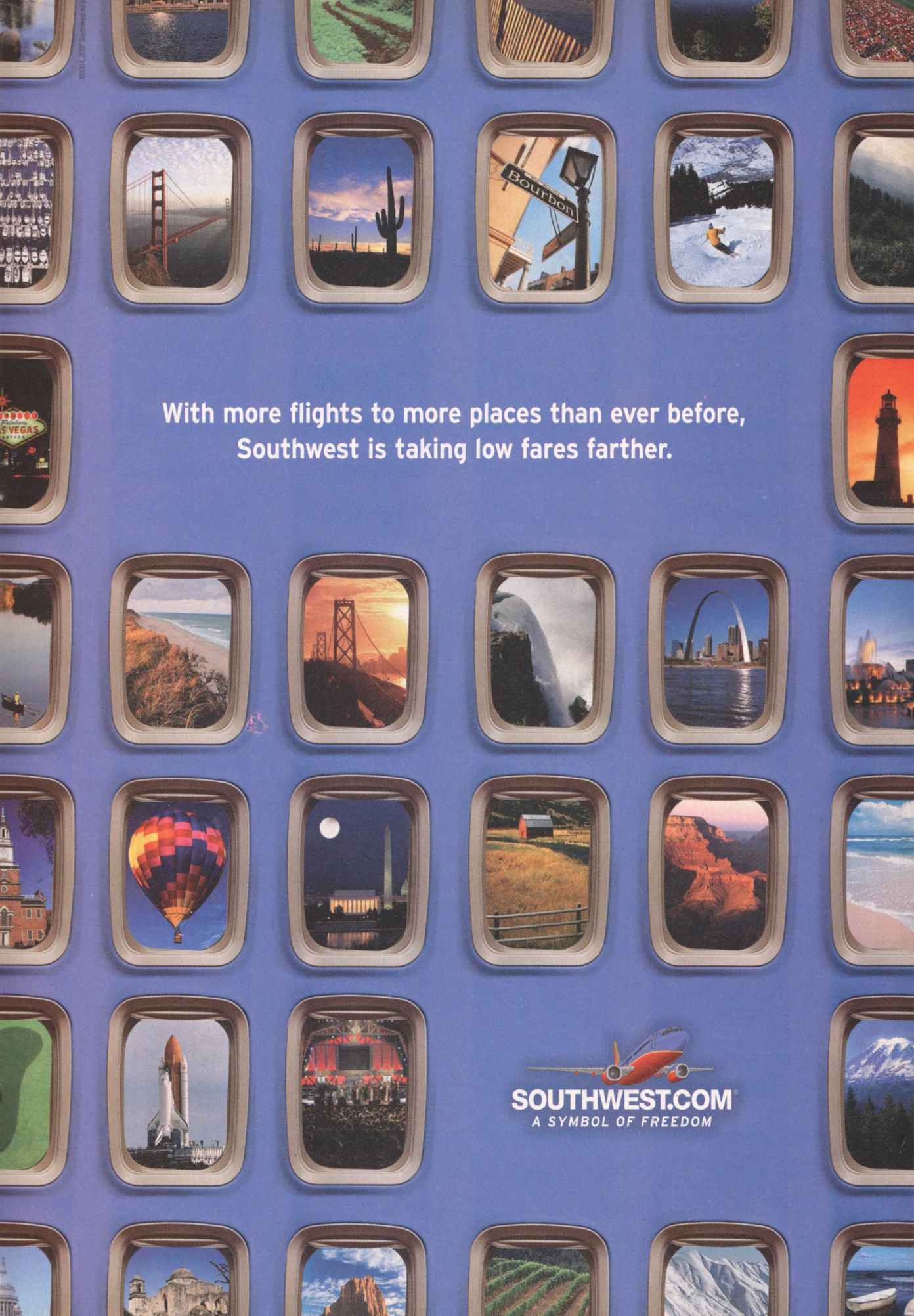
you're not in the fight until you're bleeding, that if you don't have a hook to the liver you're nothing, that if you're not moving forward you're running away.

That defines Margarito, whose immense self-belief, endurance, and toughness make him the archetypal Mexican fighter. He walked through the best right hands Cintron could muster, and essentially out-manned him in the perfect confirmation of the Mexican paradigm of Mexican-Puerto Rican matchups. Cintron submitted to him. He had to. He wasn't the man that Margarito was, wasn't as tough or as hard-nosed. He didn't have the cojones.

September 12, 1992: Two of the sport's lower-weight stars, Chavez and Camacho, meet in front of 19,100 fans at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas. Each will get $3-million. Their combined record is 122-1. After a good first round, Camacho is ground down by the relentless Chavez' left hooks to the body. He lasts the distance, barely, and loses the decision by scores of 117-111, 119-110, and 120-107.

Many of the more memorable Puerto Rican stars, excluding Trinidad, were fine technical boxers in addition to being bombers. Rosario was arguably the best one-punch knockout artist of his era, but also had sound boxing skills. Same with Gomez. And same with Cotto. It wasn't his punch or strength that got him past Mohamad Abdullaev, or Kelson Pinto, or Randall Bailey, three straight-up punchers who might hit harder with one punch than does Cotto.

It was Cotto's ability to box, jab, and dictate the terms of the fight that brought him victory. It was also that which got him past Shane Mosley. It might be what serves him against Margarito, whom one suspects will do everything he can to make it a street-fight. But even in that kind of fight Cotto is no worse than Margarito's equal, which is a way of predicting that on July 27, Cotto will still be the toast of Puerto Rico, with no need to ask for forgiveness. ■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GOING HOME to FIND the MAGIC

BUT CAN OSCAR CONJURE UP A WIN OVER MAYWEATHER?

By Nigel Collins

Maybe Oscar De La Hoya never read Thomas Wolfe's novel *You Can't Go Home Again*, in which the protagonist discovers the perils of trying to recover the past. And if he did, he certainly didn't take Wolfe's message to heart, because going home again was exactly what De La Hoya did on Cinco de Mayo weekend, when he launched his final year in the ring by fighting in the city of his birth for the first time since June 2000.

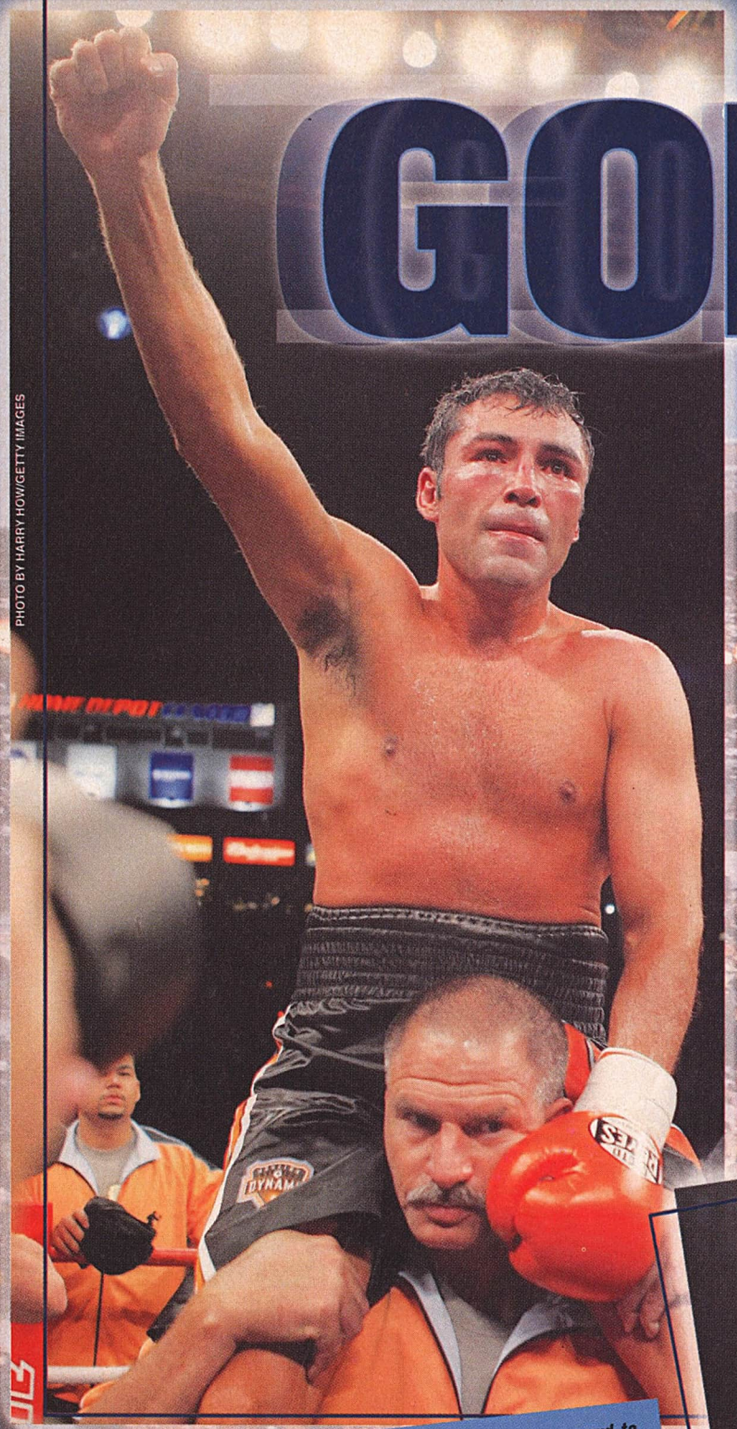


PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Reasonable ticket prices lured a capacity crowd to The Home Depot Center to watch De La Hoya's first fight in the Los Angeles area in almost eight years. The result was a one-sided decision over Steve Forbes (right) that gave "The Golden Boy" his first victory since 2006 (above) and kept him on track for a September rematch with Floyd Mayweather.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN DUNN/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

The weigh-in was held in Pershing Square and open to the public, which gave even folks who didn't attend the fight a chance to see their hometown hero.

The fact that approximately 27,000 fans filled The Home Depot Center soccer stadium to witness what amounted to a well-paid sparring session proved that De La Hoya is still the City of Angels' favorite fighting son. Whether or not he can recover the athletic prowess of his prime—or at least enough of it to go out in the blaze of glory he envisions—is a question yet to be answered.

De La Hoya's presence was pervasive in Los Angeles the first weekend of May. On Friday, Mexican music filled the air in sunny Pershing Square as a lunchtime crowd gathered to watch him weigh in for his fight with Steve Forbes the following afternoon. A familiar squeal of delight, emanating from the many females in attendance, erupted when Oscar peeled off his shirt and stepped on the scales. Apparently, reaching the age of 35 has done little to diminish his appeal to the opposite sex.

But instead of the movie-star smile that has melted hearts since he

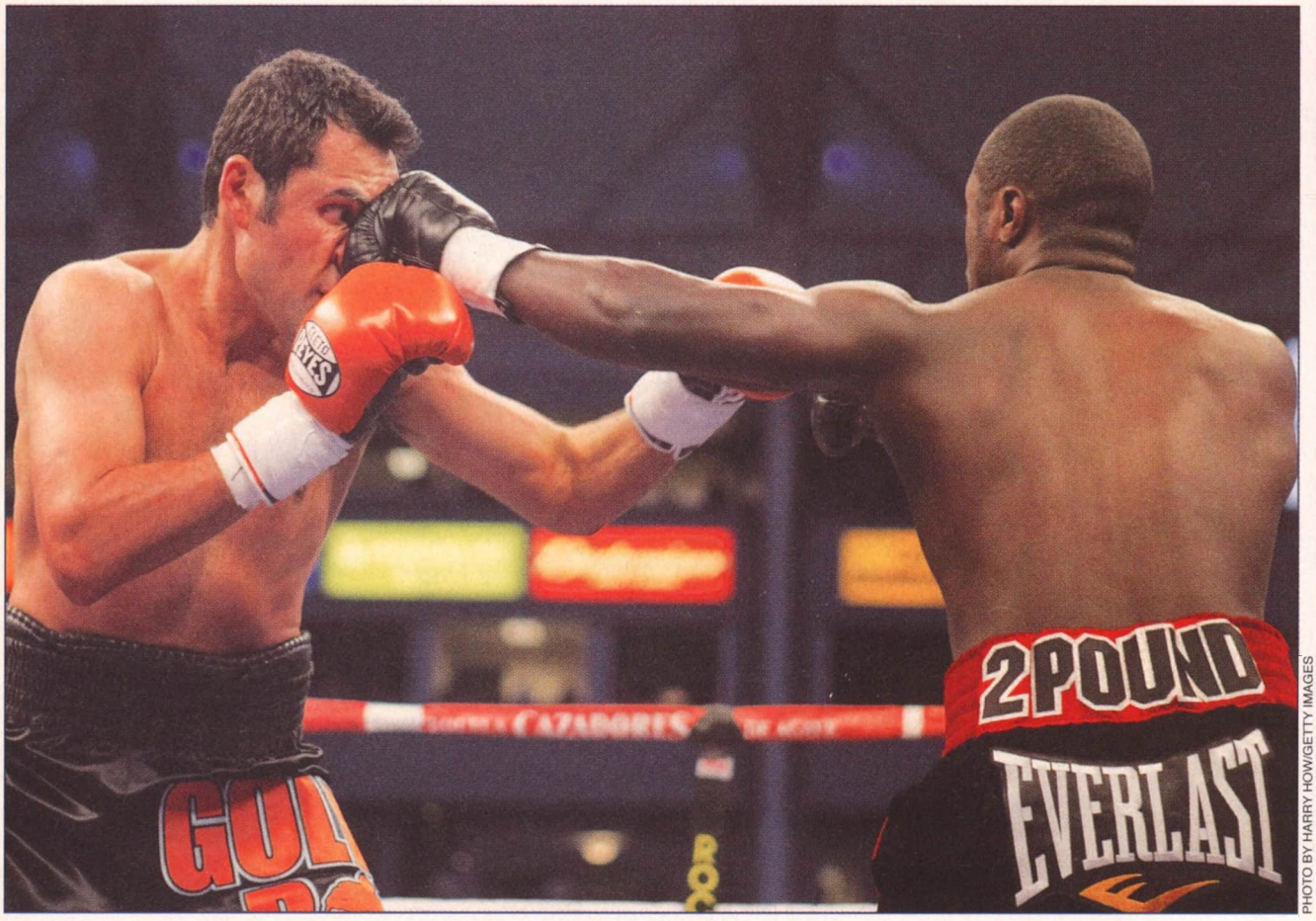


PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Although he was undersized, Forbes gave a good account of himself and landed a number of flush punches, especially in the early rounds. But unfortunately for Forbes, he lacked the punching power to hurt De La Hoya.

PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

When Forbes went into a defensive shell, De La Hoya went downstairs, and it was left hooks to the body similar to this one that convinced Forbes not to take too many chances. But at least the loser can still boast he's never been knocked down or out.

emerged from the '92 Olympics, De La Hoya, eyebrows bunched in a frown, already had his game face on when he arrived at the weigh-in. Despite the quality of his opponent, Oscar had very good reasons to be serious: If anything unexpected happened in the Forbes fight, the sequel to the biggest moneymaker in the history of boxing would be in jeopardy.

Later, as the crowd disbursed, a Metro bus buzzed passed Pershing Square, revealing a larger-than-life image of De La Hoya on the back. It was an advertisement for White Memorial Medical Center, the home of the Oscar De La Hoya Labor and Delivery Center, the Oscar De La Hoya Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and the Cecilia Gonzalez De La Hoya Cancer Center. Clearly, the same Midas touch that has blessed his professional endeavors has also benefited his hometown, where his philanthropic undertakings also include a high school and a computer-learning center.

Most likely, De La Hoya's legacy of generosity will survive long after the memory of his boxing career has faded, and, ironically, it has been his ever-expanding business empire, as much as his ring earnings, that has allowed him to give back to the community to such a large degree. In recent years, Oscar has spent far more time in his role as entrepreneur than he has as a fighter, a career path that has reaped significant financial rewards, but has also taken him away from the very thing that made him rich and famous in the first place.

On Saturday, as the festive crowd trickled into The Home Depot Center (in Carson, about a 30-minute drive outside of LA), they were greeted by a prerecorded video message from De La Hoya. The face of the man they'd come to see periodically filled the four screens located above the ring. Besides welcoming everybody to his homecoming party, De La Hoya talked about how boxing had been a platform from which he has been able to expand into other business ventures, endeavors that will allow him to prosper long after the final bell of his boxing career has rung. It was pretty humdrum stuff, but near the end of the message, he spoke four words that said more than any of those that preceded them.

"Boxing is my life," said De La Hoya, his voice rising with emotion. And therein lies the confounding duality that

PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Floyd Mayweather Sr. was back in De La Hoya's corner for the Forbes fight, and will be there again when Oscar fights his son in September. Although Big Floyd was pleased with De La Hoya's performance, he was disappointed by his man's lack of power. "That's something we're going to work on," said Big Floyd.

is De La Hoya, a man who may very well have sacrificed the last best-years of his fighting career in pursuit of a golden future, only to realize, perhaps too late, that he could have done even more.

De La Hoya may feel as comfortable in a business suit as he does in boxing trunks, but at his core he is a fighter. It has been his identity since his domineering father pushed him into the sport when he was still a boy. Over the decades, boxing has become as much a part of him as the competitive heart that beats within his chest.

Forget the movie-star looks, the pop-star wife, and the CD of sentimental ballads. Forget the luxurious lifestyle, red-carpet celebrity, and statue soon to be erected in his honor outside of the Staples Center. First and foremost, De La Hoya is a fighter who knows his time is running out. One day in the not-too-distant future, he will have his final fight—and then everything will change. He will no longer be Oscar De La Hoya, the fighter. He'll be Oscar De La Hoya, the millionaire who used to box.

On one level, that's a rare and wonderful thing, but the problem is that you don't stop being a fighter when you stop fighting, and that, as many of Oscar's predecessors have discovered, can be extremely unsettling. The best you can hope for is to be secure in the knowledge that you did the very best you could with what you had, when you still had it.

If De La Hoya felt that way, he would have quit already. That is what the farewell tour is really all about—his last chance to be the best he can be.

Of course, you can't ignore the financial implications, and there's no doubt that Oscar plans on cashing out in a big way. And who could blame him? It will, after all, be his last chance to enhance his vast investment portfolio with a huge cash infusion from the original source of his wealth. This is no small thing. De La Hoya has always controlled his financial destiny with his own two fists, and when he hangs up his gloves for good, that will no longer be true.

Still, if padding the bank account was the only reason for his farewell tour, an easier rout than another collision course with Floyd Mayweather could have been mapped. There are enough

Steve Forbes in the world to string it out indefinitely, but De La Hoya's motivation goes beyond money and speaks to his aforementioned identity as a fighter. More than anything else, De La Hoya wants to kick Mayweather's ass—and his ego has convinced him that he can.

Forbes was the first step in that process, and, as such, things went pretty much as planned. The crowd showed up, De La Hoya won convincingly, and even Forbes went home happy, reportedly $400,000 richer, with a good chance of getting additional opportunities at his natural weight of 140 pounds. The only thing missing was the knockout, which even Oscar admitted was a bit of a letdown.

"I'm a little disappointed I didn't stop him or knock him out, but that didn't happen," De La Hoya said. "Steve Forbes is a tough customer, a slick fighter with skills and maturity. I told you it was going to be a real fight."

And so it was for the first three rounds: De La Hoya, 150, went right on the offensive, jabbing his way inside and planting hard rights to the body. Forbes, 150, boxed well, avoided a lot of Oscar's offerings, and countered with crisp flurries. Despite his obvious size disadvantage, Forbes was holding his own, and "The Golden boy" soon had a lump under his left eye.

But in the fourth, De La Hoya sank a beautiful left hook to the body and things started to change, almost imperceptivity at first, but ultimately irreversibly. De La Hoya's size and harder punching allowed him to pretty much dominate after that. Forbes fired back enough to keep from being overrun, but he ate a lot of punches, especially jabs.

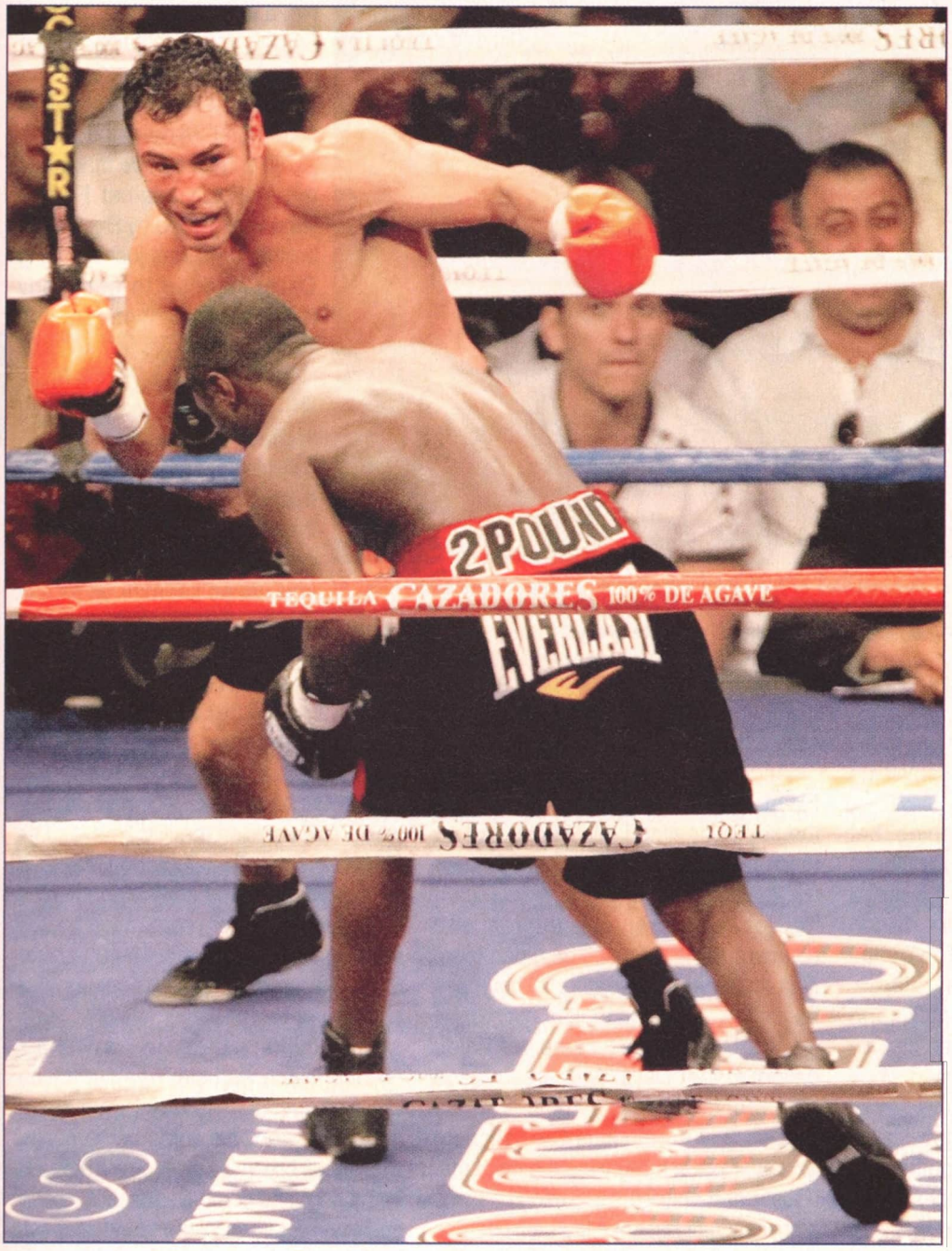


PHOTO BY STEPHEN DUNN/GETTY IMAGES

De La Hoya displayed improved stamina in the Forbes fight, and was still eager to engage in the late rounds. Whether this was the result of better conditioning or Forbes' lack of punching power is difficult to ascertain.

Although THE RING scored it tad a closer at 118-112, it was tough to argue with the officials scores of 119-109 (Marty Sammon and Max DeLuca) and 120-108 (Marcus Rosales).

"I got stunned a couple times, but not to the point I was going down," Forbes said. "He can punch, man. What's he got, 30 knockouts? But I'm a crafty vet. I told myself I've got to stay calm, and I was able to back him off me a couple times."

Not only was Forbes, 33-6 (9), able to "back him off," besides the lump under De La Hoya's left eye, he cut the bridge of his nose, and he inflicted a hairline fracture to one of his facial bones. If some of the punches that Forbes landed flush had come from Mayweather, the damage would have been far greater and the outcome radically different.

Besides, it is one thing to select a small, light-punching tuneup opponent, but another all together to allow him to finish on his feet. Even Floyd Mayweather Sr., back in De La Hoya's corner after sitting out Oscar's first fight

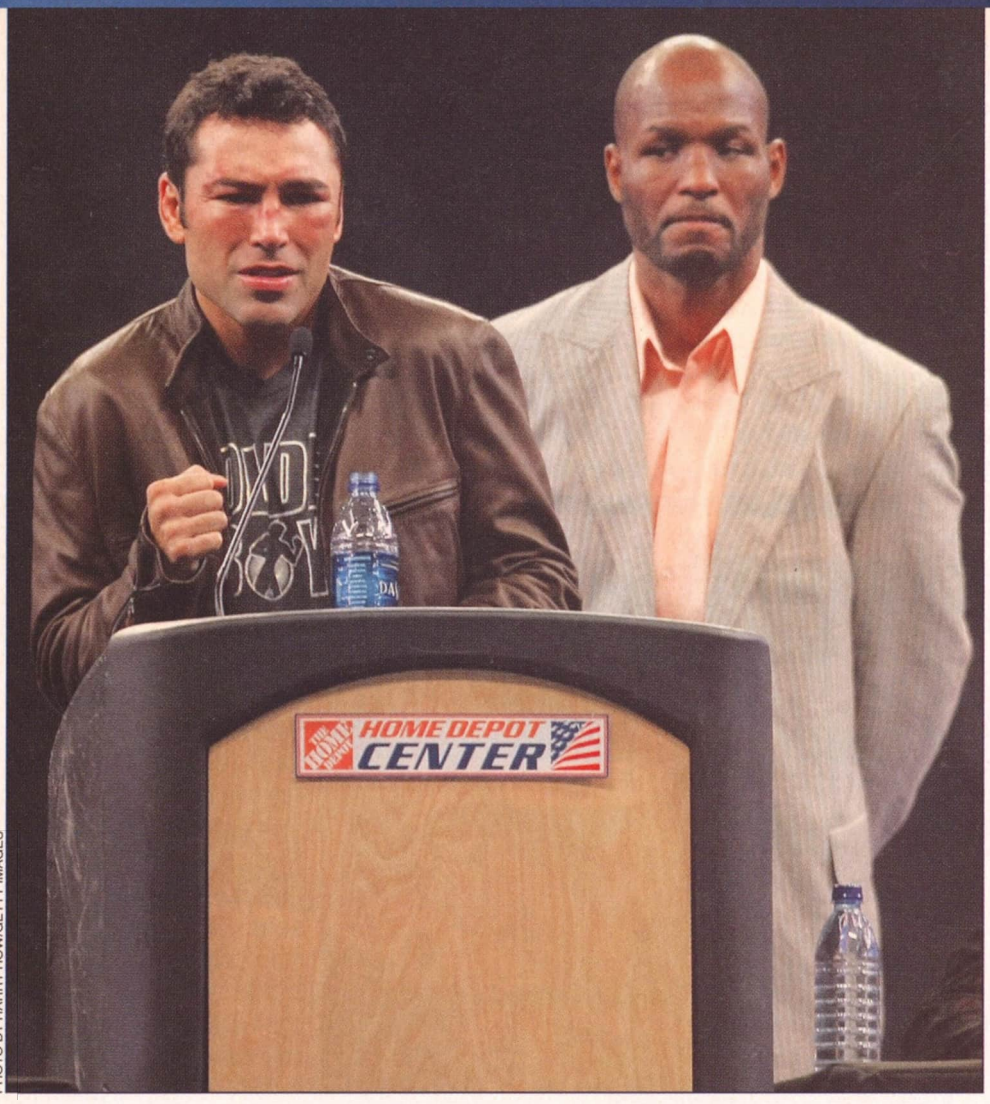


PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

A bruised De La Hoya speaks of his determination to beat Mayweather at the postfight press conference, as Bernard Hopkins looks on. How much the tuneup against Forbes will help remains to be seen, but at least Oscar won't be rusty when he enters the ring for his September rematch with "Pretty Boy."

with his son, seemed surprised that it went the distance.

"I thought Oscar would have more power," said Floyd Sr. "That's something we're going to work on."

Punching power is something that has never been a problem for De La Hoya in the past, but don't believe that old baloney about the punch being the last thing to go. The punch erodes gradually, along with reflexes and hand-eye coordination. Timing is also important, and a case can be made that the rust accumulated since losing to Mayweather, two days shy of a year earlier, had a lot to do with De La Hoya's inability to put together the punches required to stop Forbes.

"All the rust went away in the 11th and 12th rounds," said De La Hoya. "I was strong in the last half of the fight, standing on my toes, popping my jab. It was incredible, and why I feel I can still do this."

According to both Oscar and Big Floyd, lateral movement and the jab is the key to beating Little Floyd, and on those counts, both were pleased.

"If Oscar throws his jab, uses his jab aggressively, moves and counterpunches, it won't be a problem," said the elder Mayweather. "This is the beginning of training to fight my son."

The De La Hoya camp was also delighted that Oscar was "fresh in the 12th round as he was in the first," as Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard Schaefer put it, debunking the myth that "Oscar can only go six rounds." This is a critical point because De La Hoya has developed a reputation for fading the second half of fights, a weakness that was especially conspicuous in the first Mayweather fight, when he was even or slightly ahead at the half-way mark. It is also pertinent that the jab that had been largely responsible for De La Hoya's early success in that fight, and that when he stopped throwing it, Mayweather forged ahead.

"De La Hoya definitely boxed a lot more, doubling, tripling his jab—that's something Floyd Sr. teaches—and that will help him a lot [in the rematch]," said Forbes, who was trained by the elder Mayweather earlier in his career and learned enough to be dubbed "Mayweather lite."

So a case can be made that the workout against Forbes (who was trained by Big Floyd's brother Jeff) was just the thing Oscar needed to get ready for the September rematch with "Pretty Boy." Team De La Hoya certainly seemed to think so, even if at times you got the feeling they were trying to convince themselves along with everybody else. Regardless, the Forbes fight certainly didn't diminish De La Hoya's chances, and, as an infomercial for the Mayweather rematch, it did an admirable job.

"I can't wait until September," said De La Hoya, 39-5 (30). "This is personal, you watch, I'm going to beat him ... I'm going to beat the best."

Maybe he will. Don't forget that it was a split decision the first time, and as far as tuneups are concerned, 12 brisk rounds with a savvy craftsman such as Forbes is far better preparation for the rematch than knocking out a 400-pound blob with a set of brassknuckles in a choreographed wrestling match.

It's unlikely that De La Hoya's second match with Mayweather will be in Los Angeles. Therefore, in a literal sense, he won't be going home again. But like all boxers, Oscar's real home is in the ring, and come September we will find out if Thomas Wolfe knew as much about prize fighting as he did human nature. ■

WHO ARE YOU CALLING OLD?

The Best "Long-Timers" In Boxing History

By Don Stradley

As far back as the bareknuckle era, when 56-year-old Daniel Mendoza visited Banstead Downs in Surrey England to face Tom Owen, the sight of a grizzled old prizefighter has been one of the sport's enduring images. From ringside we wonder, "Can the old-timer do it again? Does he have anything left?" Secretly, we hope so. There's no better place to see experience overcome youth than in a boxing ring.

These days, the idea of a "veteran" is different than it used to be. Prior to the 1960s, the average fighter had between 80 and 100 fights by the time he was 31, and then he'd retire. During the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, fighters stayed in the game a bit longer. They weren't fighting as often, so their bodies weren't as brutalized. Also, with so many alphabet belts being created, and the staggering paydays available, there was more incentive to remain active. Now, every weight class has at least a couple of geezers who are still contenders. In fact, since there seems to be a shortage of good young fighters, this may be the first time in boxing history when older fighters outnumber the young.

The following section will take a division-by-division look at some of boxing's greatest "long-timers," the fighters who not only lasted a long time, but also were still competitive and thrilling. Some of our choices were obvious; others may surprise you. You may wonder why fighters like Sam Langford, Jack Johnson, and Willie Pep aren't mentioned here. It's because, although they all had long careers, their final years in the ring were not particularly inspiring. With some long-timers, you just wish they'd retire (think Evander Holyfield). The fellows on our list actually made fans happy, even if they were well past their primes. We also stuck with the traditional weight classes—no super or junior middleweights here, and no cruiserweights.

As our selections took shape, we noticed some patterns. For one thing, there was a sense that these fighters were seeking something they'd been denied in their younger days—a title shot, redemption, recognition, or, in some cases, a well-deserved payday.

Another common factor was travel. Many of these fighters were world travelers, which gave them an exotic aura. Not only were they older than most fighters, they seemed bestowed with a wisdom picked up on the road.

A third factor was enormous popularity. Sometimes it seemed as if the fate of a nation depended on these fighters.

Finally, a lot of these fellows simply had superlative skills, even as their birthdays piled up. If you could knock guys out and get paid for it, you'd probably keep fighting too.

HEAVYWEIGHT

George Foreman

PHOTO BY MARC MORRISON

Foreman during the peak of his comeback

When 45-year-old George Foreman borrowed a thunderbolt from the heavens and fired it at the chin of Michael Moorer, he became the oldest man to win a boxing championship in any division. The 12,000 onlookers at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas erupted, but they were not cheering "Big George's" age; they were cheering for George. For there may someday be a fighter who'll win a championship at an age beyond 45, but there will never be a story quite like Foreman's.

When he returned to boxing in 1987 after a 10-year absence, Foreman was chided for being a fat old man. But, in retrospect, he wasn't that old, and he wasn't even that fat. He was only 37, and his large physique still contained much of the power that had terrorized the heavyweights of the 1970s.

What Foreman brought along for this amazing second act of his career was a sense of humor and self-promotion, a faith in God, and a more relaxed style that would get his aging legs through some pretty tough fights.

There was another factor that many suspected but didn't mention—the 1974 knockout loss to Muhammad Ali. For years, Foreman had carried it around in his mind like a stinger. A former street preacher facing bankruptcy, Foreman returned to boxing for purely financial reasons. But when Foreman learned he could actually hold his own against the heavyweights of the '90s, he started gunning for the ghosts of Zaire.

At 40, Foreman was granted a shot at the young champion of the day, Evander Holyfield. "The Real Deal" won a well-deserved unanimous decision, but Foreman won the night with his better-than-expected showing, turning himself into an instant folk hero.

Undeterred by the loss, Foreman rumbled on. He banged out wins over Alex Stewart and Pierre Coetzer,

and then lost on points to Tommy Morrison. Morrison, a powerful young hitter, became a dance master against Foreman. Morrison was criticized for his less-than-daring strategy, but who could blame him? Foreman could still punch, as Michael Moorer would learn later.

The WBA almost nixed Foreman as an opponent for Moorer, until Foreman and his camp filed a lawsuit charging unlawful age discrimination. Wearing the faded red trunks he'd worn in Zaire, Foreman stopped Moorer with one stiff right to the chin in the 10th.

Let's forget for a minute the cheeseburger jokes. Let's forget the mufflers and grills and fat pants for men, and the microphone job at HBO. Instead, focus on what Foreman did in the ring during those later years. In his 34 comeback bouts, he was never knocked off his feet. True, he was as slow as a glacier, but as his opponents learned, fighting a glacier is not easy. Foreman also had a backlog of ring savvy. Foreman's underrated intelligence will always separate him from other aging heavyweights who attempt the "George Foreman comeback thing."

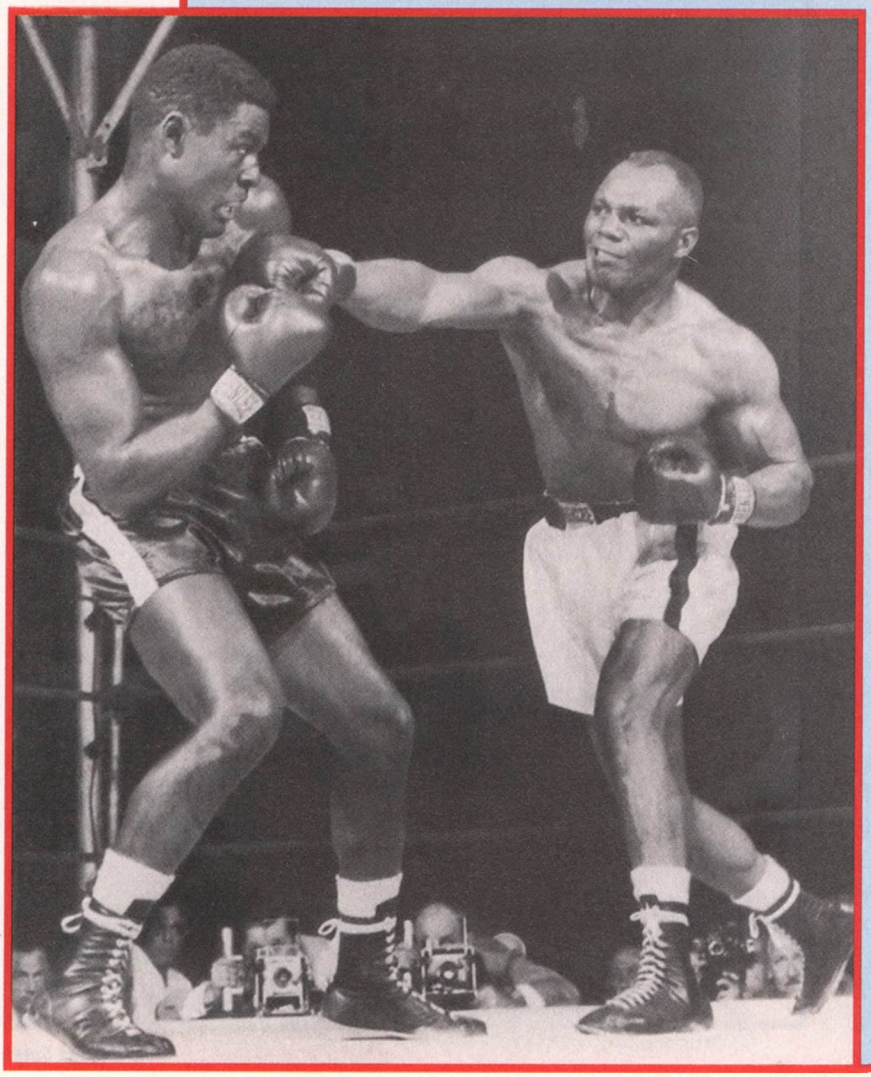
Foreman banished Ali's ghost just in time, for after beating Moorer he was less impressive in decision wins over Axel Schulz, Crawford Grimsley, and Lou Savarese.

Ironically, Foreman looked good in his final bout, a disputed decision loss to Shannon Briggs. Foreman, by now 48, landed the harder blows all night, but when two of three ringside judges voted against him, Foreman didn't protest. Fittingly, the final round of Foreman's unique career saw him break the nose of a much younger man.

Honorable Mention

Before Foreman, **Jersey Joe Walcott** was the heavyweight division's favorite old pappy. He won the championship at age 37, and was good enough at age 38 to nearly beat Rocky Marciano before being kayoed. The secret to Walcott's longevity was his odd style. He could gracefully backpedal from an opponent, or he could shuffle forward with his head bobbing like a turtle. Somehow, he made it work beautifully. He was also a favorite of the press, earning the nickname "The Merchantville Methuselah." He could punch a little, too, which is helpful for an old heavyweight ... **Larry Holmes** boxed until the age of 52, and, like Foreman and Walcott, got by on craft long after everything else had given out. Unlike most other fighters who continue fighting at an advanced age, Holmes didn't do it because he was broke. He did it because, in his own words, he "liked fighting for money." And when you can still snap the jab hard enough to beat Olympian Ray Mercer, as Holmes did at 42, why not keep going? He had two title shots in later years, one against Evander Holyfield, and another against WBC titlist Oliver McCall. He fell short both times but fought well. As he approached 50, he defeated aging warhorses Mike Weaver and Bonecrusher Smith in rematches of bouts they'd had decades earlier ... Holmes was never given his due as champion, having to toil in Ali's shadow. Perhaps Holmes kept fighting because he was waiting for someone to say, "Good job, Larry." His record after the age of 40 was 21-3 (10).

Walcott fires a right at Ezzard Charles



LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

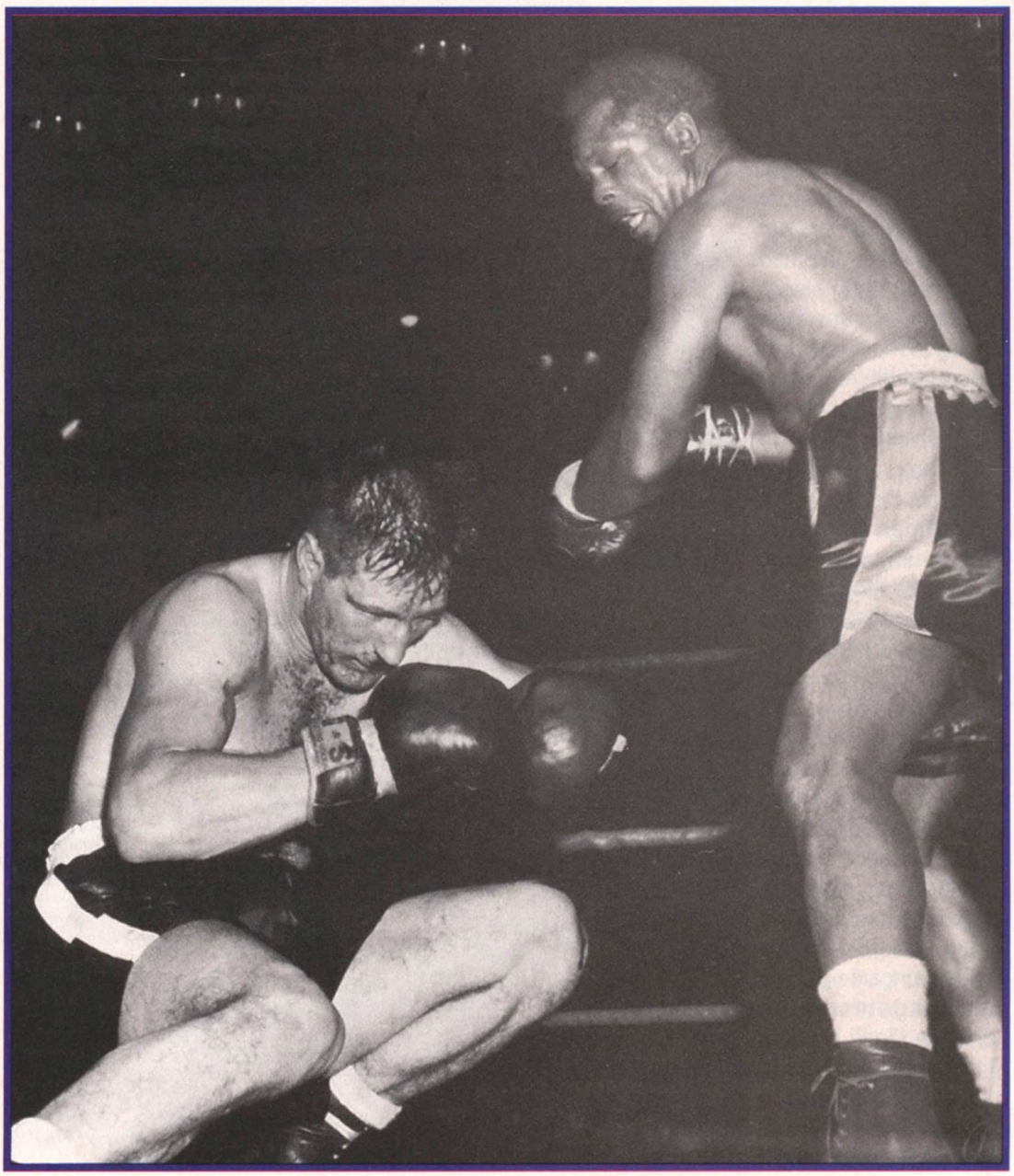
Archie Moore

On a December night in 1958, two men entered the Montreal Forum to decide the light heavyweight championship. One was 29-year-old Yvon Durelle, a free-swinging puncher known as "The Fighting Fisherman." The other was Archie Moore, known affectionately to the press as "Ancient Archie," a champion who was either 42 or 45, depending on whose records you were using. Moore's body was an unshapely mass of beef, fat, and surgical scars, but his eyes were sharp, as if the firing pins in his brain would long outlast the limitations of his flesh.

In a fight that resembled nothing less than a cowboy shoot-'em-up at the Saturday matinee, Moore survived four savage knockdowns to come pounding back and stop Durelle to retain the championship. The "Old Mongoose" had won the greatest battle ever waged by any fighter over 40.

Moore reached down and revealed everything in his arsenal that night, an arsenal built up during the previous 23 years and 204 bouts. Everything he'd learned, from Kid Pocahuntas in Hot Springs, Arkansas, to Rocky Marciano in Yankee Stadium, came roaring out. He showed the poise of a fighter who spent the best years of his career waiting for a title shot like a cat outside a fish market, having been avoided by a decade's worth of champions. He showed the resilience of a fighter who often fought thrice a month out of financial necessity. He showed the mental toughness of a fighter who, as a youngster with less than 30 fights on his ledger, was facing nasty veterans like Sammy Slaughter and Johnny "Bandit" Romero.

A writer for True magazine wrote of Moore, "He is an Emperor Jones, a Caesar, a Barrymore, an Othello, despite his obvious resemblance to a middle-aged fat man working



Moore sends Durelle to the floor in a classic brawl

zealously to lose weight in a Turkish bath." After turning 40, Moore's record was 25-3-2 (15). He kept going, until a young Muhammad Ali stopped him at age 47. After that, Moore boxed exhibitions, including some novelty bouts with wrestler Mike DiBiase, but for all intents and purposes, his career ended at the hands of Ali.

Moore destroyed every theory about longevity: He didn't preserve his body, he abused it by fighting constantly; he didn't pay close attention to diet and conditioning; he routinely zoomed above his fighting weight. He could box, and developed a crablike defense that kept his head protected, but he was no safety-first defensive master. He brawled and threw bombs, scoring a record for career knockouts: 131.

As his beard turned gray and his waistline increased, Moore kidded reporters that he was even older than they thought. Sportswriters of the day knew better than to plead with Moore to retire. Instead, they sat back and enjoyed his mastery. Moore didn't get old, he got great. And he did it at a time when fighters still did their roadwork wearing army boots, and nutritionists were nowhere to be found. Moore's idea of nutrition was to chew up a steak, swallow the juices, and spit out the bulk.

For Moore, being the game's favorite old-timer was a two-sided blade. A. J. Liebling said of Moore in 1961, "Now he is at long last popular, but for a reason that he rather scorns: He is so old that the fight fans come to see whether he can survive one more adventure. They watch him as they would a rodeo clown without a barrel." In turn, Moore once wrote a note to Liebling and signed it, "The most unappreciated fighter in the world."

That unappreciated feeling may have been at the root of Moore's longevity. Once he reached the top, he was determined to stay there until everyone realized the breadth of his genius.

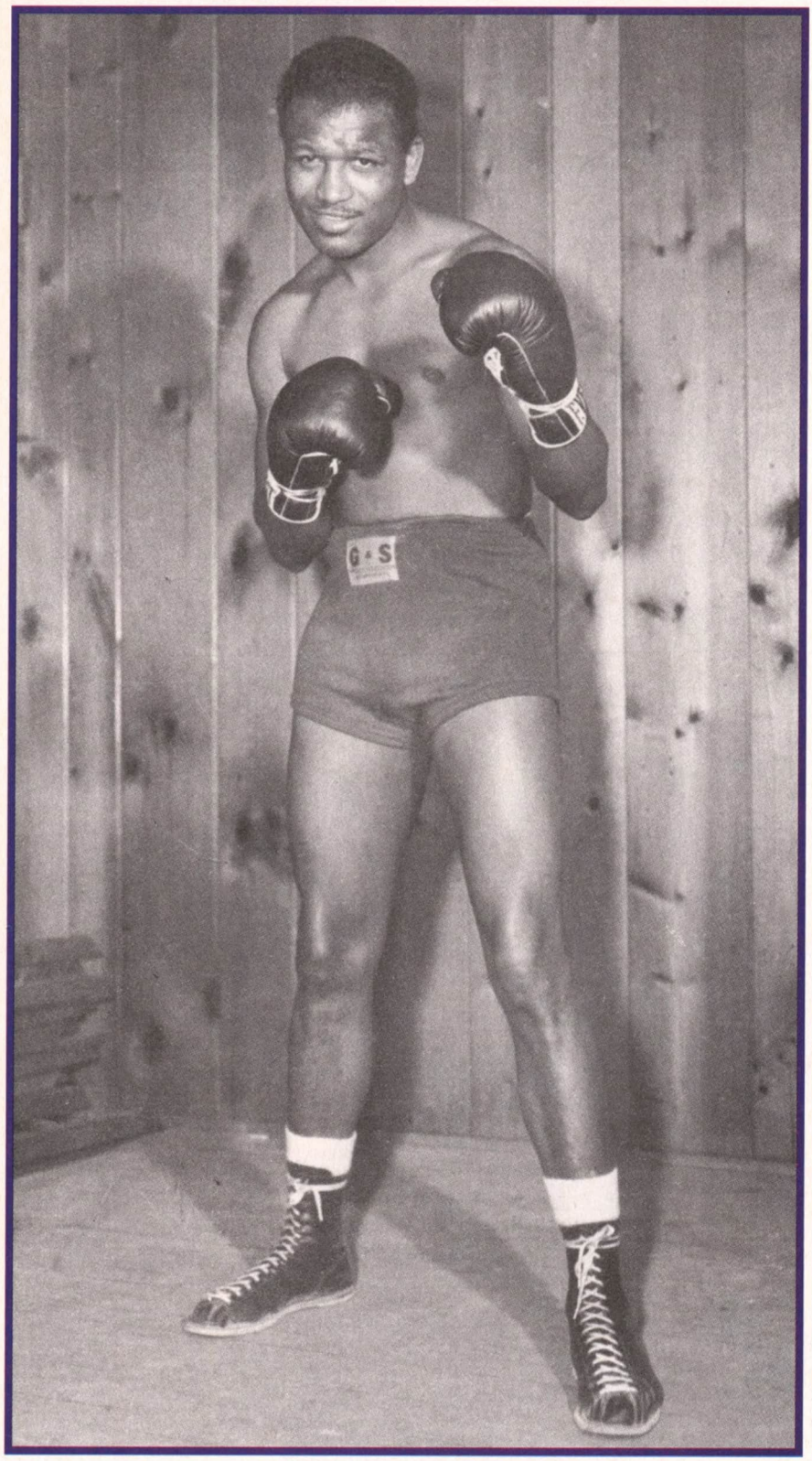
Honorable Mention

The light heavyweight division has a long history of successful older fighters, going back to 1903, when **Bob Fitzsimmons** won the title at age 40. It was a newly created division at the time, and Fitz had already been champion at middleweight and heavyweight. At 40, he still had enough to outpoint George Gardner for the title. Fitz had his last bout at age 50 ... Other 175-pounders to have lengthy careers include **Battling Levinsky**, **Mike McTigue**, **Harold Johnson**, **Bob Foster**, **Dick Tiger**, **Virgil Hill**, and **Mike McCallum**. Currently, **Bernard Hopkins** is still effective at 43, while Antonio Tarver, Roy Jones, and Glen Johnson are all competitive at 39 ... **Dennis Andries**, "The Hackney Rock," did his best work after the age of 35. After losing the WBC 175-pound title to Tommy Hearns in 1987, he regained the belt after Hearns left the class. Then Andries lost, regained, and lost the title again in a tremendous three-bout series with the much younger Jeff Harding. Andries was 38 by the time the Harding-Andries wars were over, but he would have 15 more bouts before retiring at 43 ... Going back one century, **Charles "Kid" McCoy** fought to an astonishing 44. What kept McCoy punching all those years? Well, six divorces might have had something to do with it.

Fitzsimmons in his fancy duds

MIDDLEWEIGHT

Sugar Ray Robinson



Robinson became a sentimental favorite after he was past his prime

"I know my age, and I'm not a miracle man. But something is left, some percentage of what I had. I think there is enough left to take the title again. I believe I can outbox and outthink an opponent."

That's Sugar Ray Robinson at 43, talking to UPI after a successful boxing tour of France. Even if he was just a busted out jalopy of a fighter, Europeans still adored Robinson. He had plans to return, and perhaps challenge for the junior middleweight title held by Sandro Mazzinghi of Italy. Robinson, still a dreamer with an eye toward the spectacular, imagined a blockbuster bout in Milan. It never happened.

New York promoter Harry Markson refused to book him at Madison Square Garden, so the magnificent Robinson, whose body had once been a perfect boxing machine, took his show on the road and kept it there. "Where else can I make what I can still earn in boxing?" he asked. "I have enough money to live a good life without boxing, but I'd have to adjust." In other words, womanizing and pink Cadillacs can be expensive. This love of luxury kept Robinson in battle until his 200th bout, when he could barely stand up to the light-hitting Joey Archer.

Another factor that may have contributed to Robinson's longevity was that, finally, he had become a beloved figure, something he'd not been in his prime. Critics may have been unanimous in lauding Robinson as a fighter, but they were also unanimous in describing his "flawed" character. Time and again he was described as arrogant, a cocky king surrounded by yes men and sycophants. That's partly why the fighters who beat him were immediately elevated to stardom. Robinson had to allow the public to witness his gradual disintegration

in order to become a sentimental favorite.

Robinson's dismal final years tend to overshadow his amazing achievements between the ages of 34 and 39. In that time, he kayoed Bobo Olson twice; he lost the title to Gene Fullmer and then regained it with perhaps the most perfect punch in boxing history; he split a pair of wild fights with Carmen Basilio, bouts that earned THE RING's Fight of the Year honors for 1957 and '58. After dropping a pair of split decisions to Paul Pender, he met Fullmer a third time and, at age 39, earned a draw that many ringsiders thought he won.

These achievements happened at a time when most fighters retired in their early-30s. Jersey Joe Walcott and Archie Moore were considered freaks of nature to be champions in their late-30s. But no one ever called Robinson a freak. With Robinson, it was "magic." When the magic was gone, he was still pretty damned good. Nat Loubet of THE RING wrote after Robinson kayoed Fullmer, "As the 37-year-old Ray stressed in whipping Fullmer, he is a boxing wizard, a crafty, plotting ring general, a fighter with a mission, and a scrapper with an intense pride. He hates to lose." Robinson often belittled the sport for its violence, but as Jimmy Cannon once wrote of Robinson, "No one ever enjoyed being a champion more."

There have been other middleweights who didn't look as shot near the end, but they'd never looked great to begin with. If we had to choose one aging middleweight to spend our money on, we'd pick the Sugarman. Some fighters make you want to buy a ticket; others don't.

That was Ray Robinson's art.

Honorable Mention

There's a good argument that Bernard Hopkins had a better run in his dotage than Robinson. At the same age Robinson was battling Fullmer, Basilio, and Pender, Hopkins was beating Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya, and losing two incredibly close fights to Jermain Taylor. Like many other older fighters, Hopkins was ignored for many years and seemed determined to make people notice him, even if he had to wait until his late-30s. A smart ring tactician, Hopkins adopted a cautious style that prolonged his career. But while we are in awe of Hopkins' longevity, we're not in awe of his fights. Too many dull rounds cost him the top spot here ... Other middleweights who fought at an advanced age include **Mysterious Billy Smith**, **Tommy Ryan**, **Ceferino Garcia**, **Leo Houk**, **Joey Giardello**, **Holly Mims**, **Bennie Briscoe**, and **Emile Griffith** ... **Roberto Duran** was at his best at lightweight, but he gets a mention here. He shocked us at age 37 by taking the WBC middleweight title from Iran Barkley. Duran was terrible in his next bout, a non-effort against Ray Leonard, but "Hands Of Stone" had a respectable run as an old middleweight. With vast ring smarts and a right hand that still carried a little pop, Duran fought until age 50. He might still be fighting if a car accident hadn't slowed him down

Hopkins tallied his 20th middleweight defense at age 40

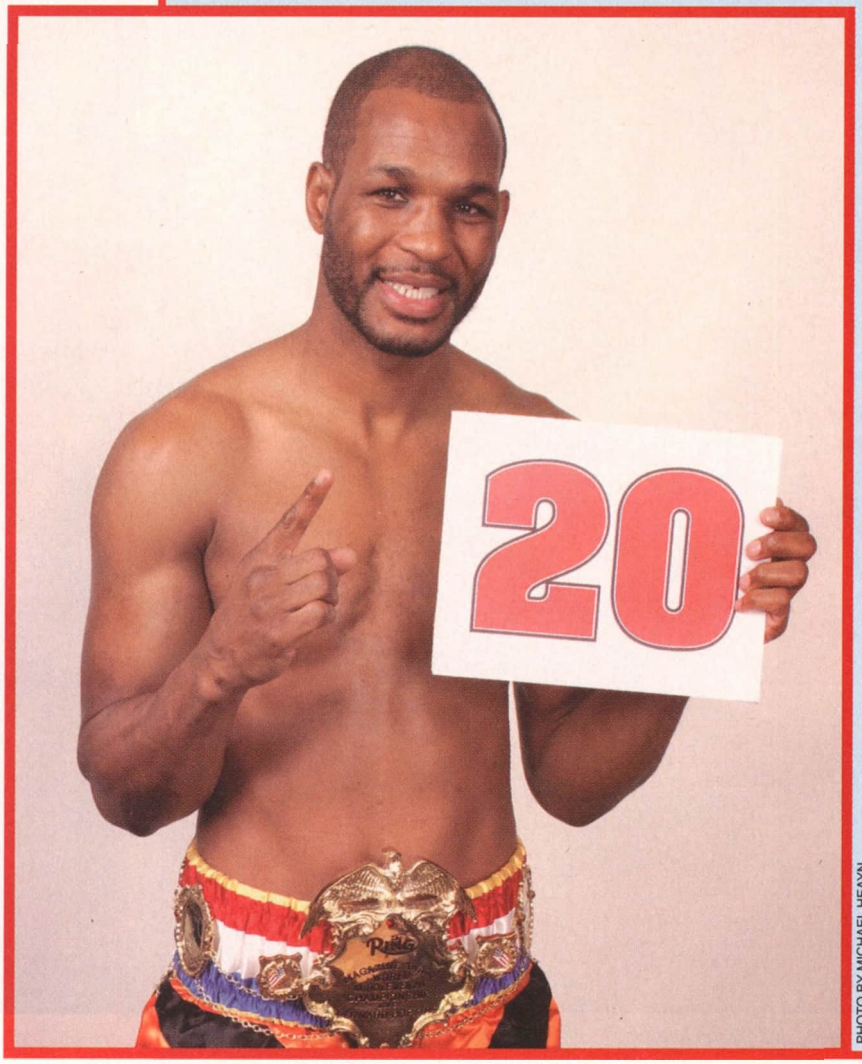


PHOTO BY MICHAEL HEAYN

WELTERWEIGHT

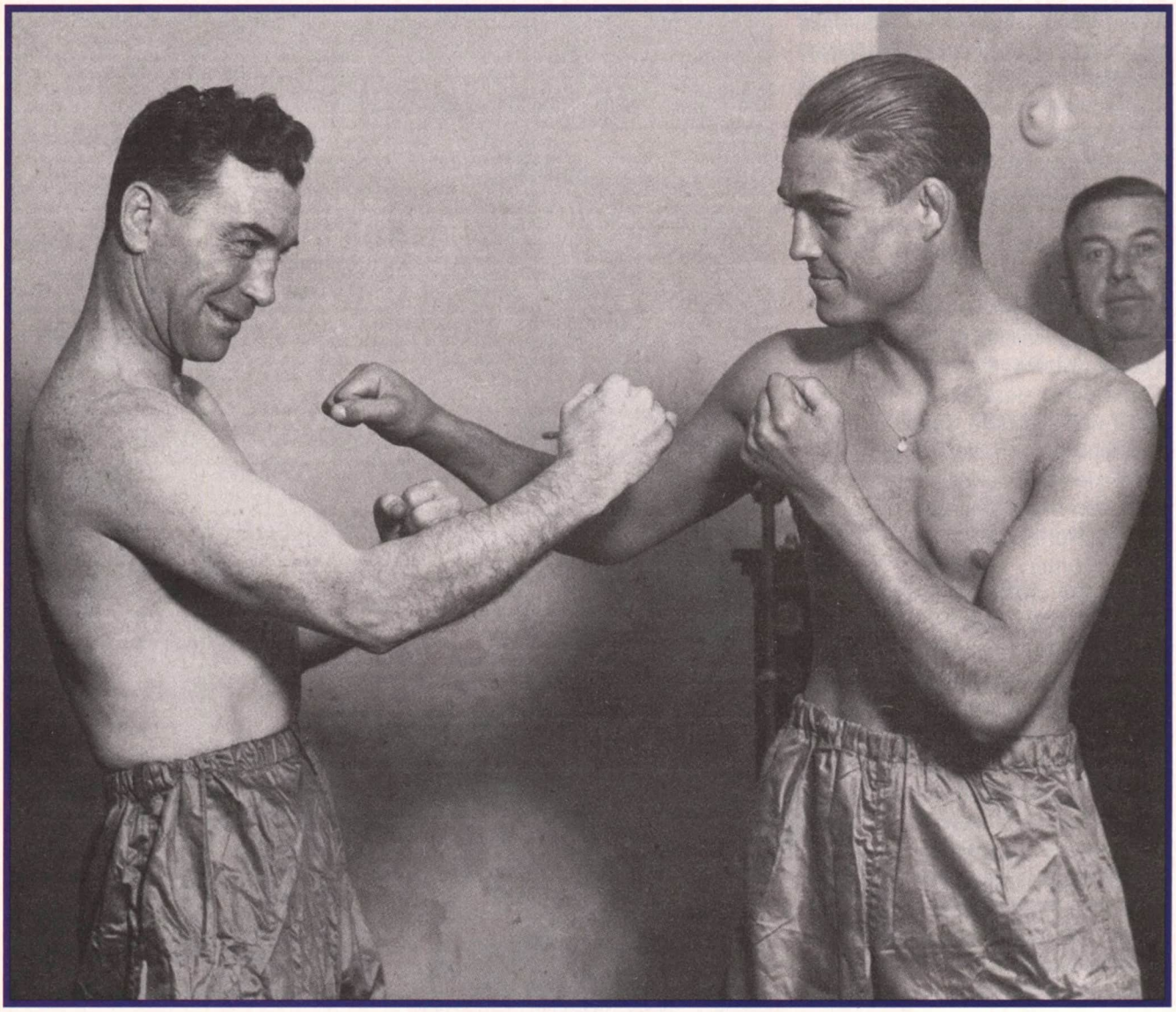
Jack Britton

When former welterweight champion Jack Britton was long retired from boxing, he gave boxing lessons at a posh New York health club. One afternoon, while being interviewed by a New York writer, the subject of retirement for fighters came up. Wiping his glasses, Britton said, "Thirty. That's when a fighter starts to lose it."

This was odd coming from Britton. His nickname was "The Boxing Marvel," but he might've been called "The Ageless Marvel," for he amassed a total of 350 recorded bouts, fighting to the age of 44 years 10 months. Doubly astounding was the fact that he did this from 1905 to 1930, an era remembered as boxing's Jurassic period. He usually said that his career record included at least 400 bouts, and he might not have been exaggerating. When he started out, fighters didn't even wear mouthpieces, never mind keep close track of their records.

"I was sort of a wandering Arab," Britton said. "If I wanted to take a trip to New Orleans, I'd write some promoter, get my fare and fee, and enjoy the sights till the money ran out. Then I'd write to a promoter in some other part of the country, get more fare and fees, and live happily until the next move."

Over the years, Britton developed an odd style, standing at an angle and leading with his left ear. It was a cauliflower beauty, a horrific stump of calcified flesh so inviting that opponents were compelled to throw



Britton (left) squares off with Hilario Martinez in 1927, 21 years into his pro career

punches at it. Britton would roll with the punch, absorbing the blow on his "cushion," and counter with his jab. At the height of his fame, the fans would often count out loud as he landed his left—"one, two, three,"—as if they were Britton's personal punch stat keepers.

Britton's manager was the loquacious Dan Morgan. "Dumb Dan" knew Britton's age was a selling point that could be exploited.

"He's better at 37 than he was 10 years ago," Morgan told syndicated columnist Robert Edgren in 1922. Maybe Morgan was just blowing smoke, but at 37 Britton got the best of the great Benny Leonard for 12 rounds before Leonard fouled him and lost by disqualification.

"Britton's success is due to his careful living, as well as his wonderful boxing head," Morgan said. "Jack eats plain food, and plenty of it, and he is not a prohibitionist in any form. Anyone who has a case of Haig & Haig and is afraid to keep it can send it to Britton. He also smokes a good cigar now and then and enjoys life." The article was accompanied by an illustration of Britton smiling, with a caption reading: "Jack Britton, a great champion who laughs at age limits."

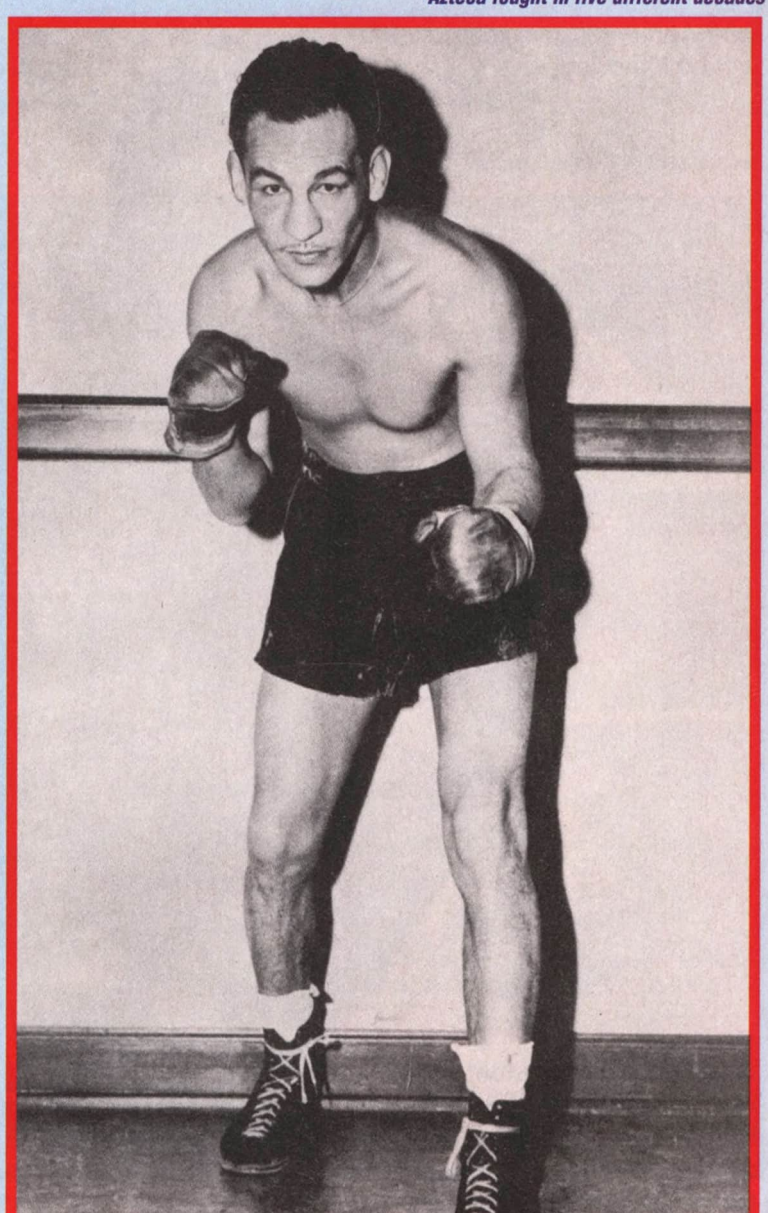
After losing the welterweight championship to Mickey Walker, Britton claimed his training had been ruined by an epic case of insomnia. After a lengthy sabbatical away from boxing, he told the press that his insomnia was still not cured, offering $10,000 to anyone who could suggest a remedy. "While I have no particular designs on getting the championship again, I think that I have a lot of boxing in me if I can get back to normal," Britton said. "If I can't, I'll be forced to quit."

Apparently, Britton licked his pillow problems, because he continued fighting for another eight years. He wasn't a big puncher—of his 350 recorded bouts, he scored only 30 knockouts—but his skills were such that he could go 10 rounds without much fuss, just like in his gypsy days. In 1928, at 43, he fought 15 times. He was no longer fighting the Leonards and Walkers, but he was still leading Father Time on points.

Honorable Mention

The welterweight class has seen a few other champions fight well into their 30s. Jack Britton's arch-rival, **Ted "Kid" Lewis**, was no slouch in the longevity department. Lewis fought until he was 36. At age 34, he scored seven consecutive knockouts. His final bout, in 1929, was a one-round kayo of another one of his rivals, Johnny Basham ... If the record keepers are right, **Kid Azteca** (a.k.a. Luis Villanueva Paramo) was born in 1913, started his career in 1920, and fought until '61 when he was 47. Like many fighters from that era, there are murky areas regarding his exact date of birth and his exact pro debut. But give or take a year or two and Azteca is still an incredible figure. Some records have him fighting professionally in 1928, at age 15. If that's true, Azteca fought in the 1920s, '30s, '40s, '50s, and '60s, placing him in a select group of fighters to box in five different decades. Mexican promoters carefully matched the aging Azteca, usually against inexperienced local pugs.

Azteca fought in five different decades



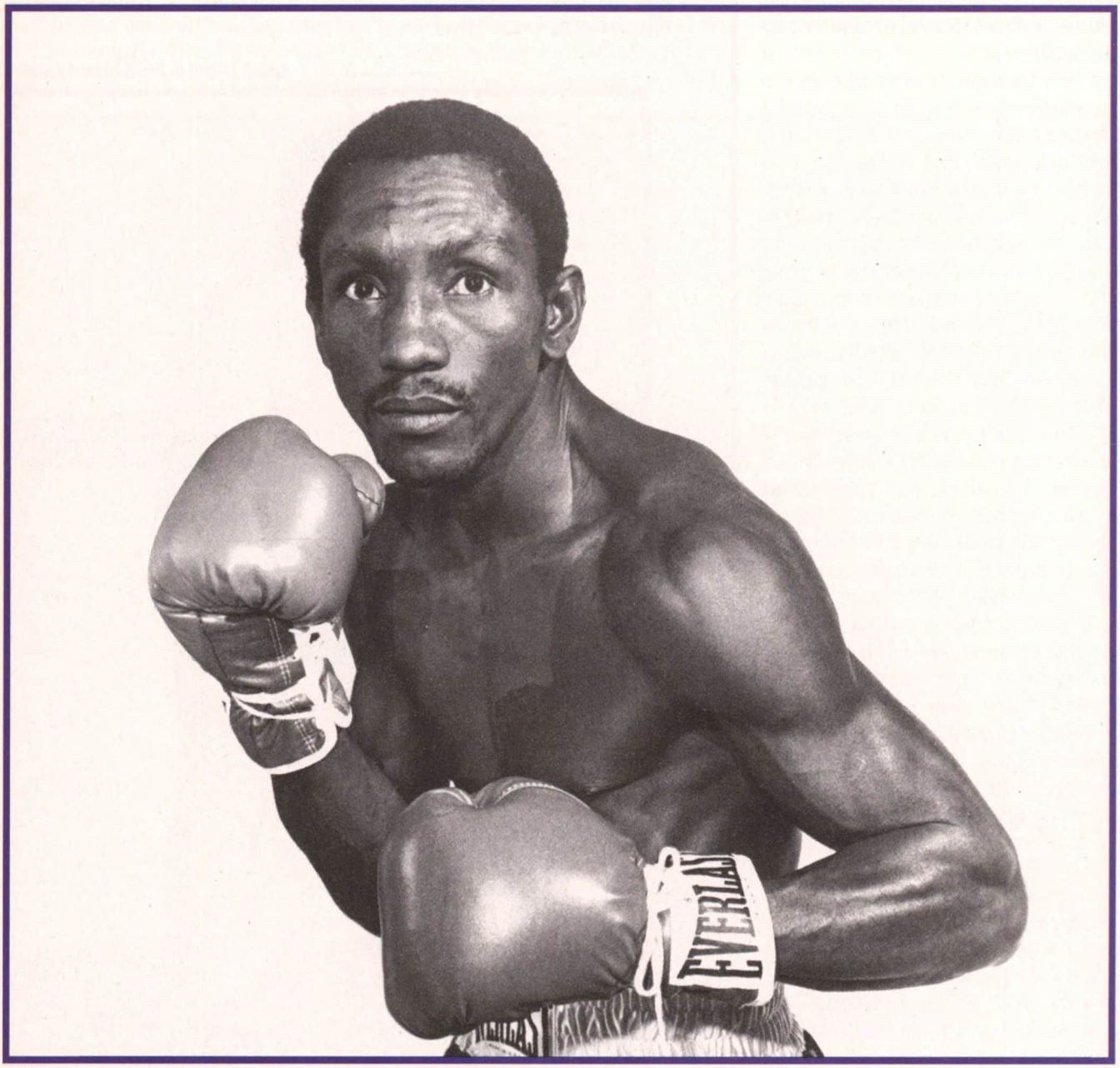
JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

Antonio Cervantes

Antonio Cervantes was 30 when he lost the WBA junior welterweight title to Wilfred Benitez. Cervantes had seemed much older not only because he was a long-reigning champion who had already made 10 successful title defenses, but also because Benitez was freakishly young at 17.

Cervantes would have been pardoned if he had retired right then. It had been a split decision, and he could've enjoyed hearing his fans say he really deserved the win, that Benitez only won because they'd fought in Benitez' home turf of Puerto Rico. Cervantes had already had a colorful career, marked by his bloody feud with Nicolino Locche. But Cervantes, a cult hero in Colombia known as "Kid Pambele," was back in the ring two weeks later, scoring a one-round knockout of Javier Ayala.

Cervantes' followers always believed he was under the guidance of some divine power. The heavenly machinations seemed to be working, as Benitez would



Colombian great Cervantes was almost 38 when he hung up his gloves

be stripped of the alphabet belt the next year, and Cervantes would fight for the vacant title in Venezuela. He would win, stopping Carlos Gimenez in six rounds.

It was as if he'd never lost the title. Cervantes defended six more times. After fighting in such far-flung locales as Thailand and Botswana, he finally made his Madison Square Garden debut. The challenger was a Dominican, Miguel Montilla, and when Cervantes was awarded the decision, the Dominican fans hurled garbage, glass, and other debris from the balcony. According to the UPI report, the Dominican fans were sore losers: "The champion, who says he is 33, gave the 24-year-old a lesson in defensive boxing." Cervantes added, "He was very tough, as tough as I expected. I knew if I wasn't in good shape, a younger man could beat me, so I was sure to be ready. He didn't lose; I won."

No Colombian boxing star lived larger than Cervantes. There were motorcycles, speed boats, wine, parties, and expensive condos in Boca Grande, the ritziest part of Cartagena, Colombia. But Cervantes was occasionally self-destructive. Colombian journalist Juan Gossain described him as "The Colossus who decided to put dynamite to his own statue." Still, Cervantes never sank so low that his boxing skills deserted him. At 34, he easily outclassed Korean challenger Kwang Kim. A rematch with Montilla ended more decisively, as Cervantes stopped him in seven.

Eventually, Cervantes' aging hands couldn't fend off the whirlwind of Aaron Pryor. A few months before his 35th birthday, Cervantes fought Pryor in Cincinnati and fell in four. For the second time in his career, a young lion had defeated him.

Bloody and beaten, but still game, Cervantes said he wanted a rematch with Pryor. He said it was only the blood in his eyes that had cost him the title, but his manager, Ramiro Machado, told the press, "We are finished ... no more fights."

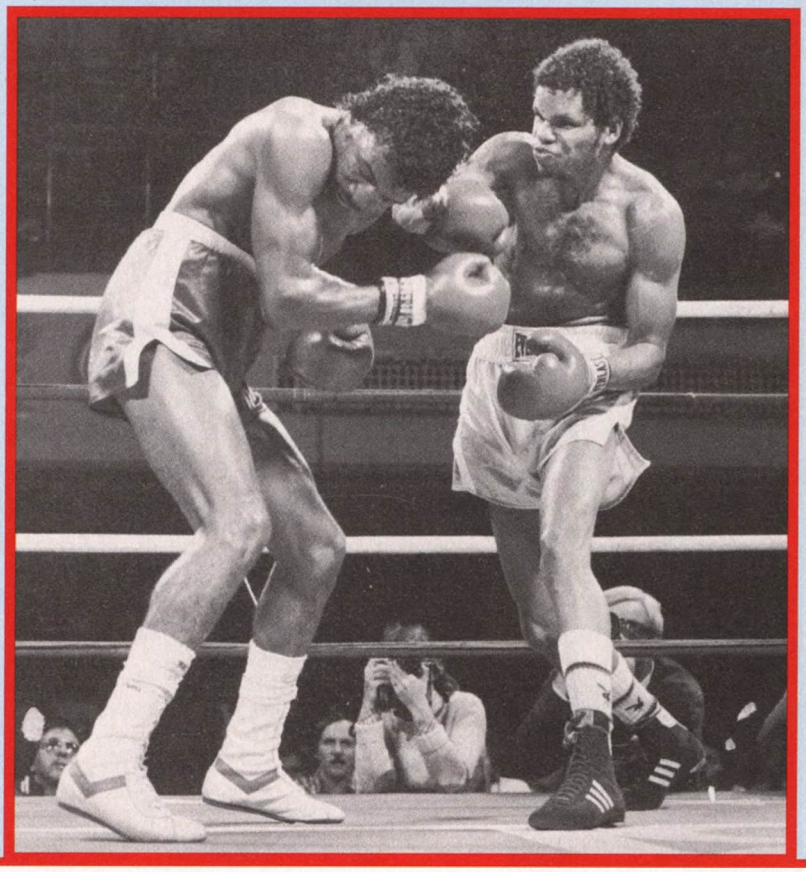
Cervantes retired briefly, but at age 36 he returned. He was matched with Lennox Blackmoore, a fighter who had been beaten by Pryor but was trying to regain his contender status. In front of his adoring public in Bogotá, Kid Pambele kayoed Blackmoore in nine frames. He still had it.

Cervantes would continue fighting for another two years. Even as his past conquerors faded into oblivion and embarrassment, Cervantes enjoyed the cheers of his fans until he was two weeks shy of 38.

Honorable Mention

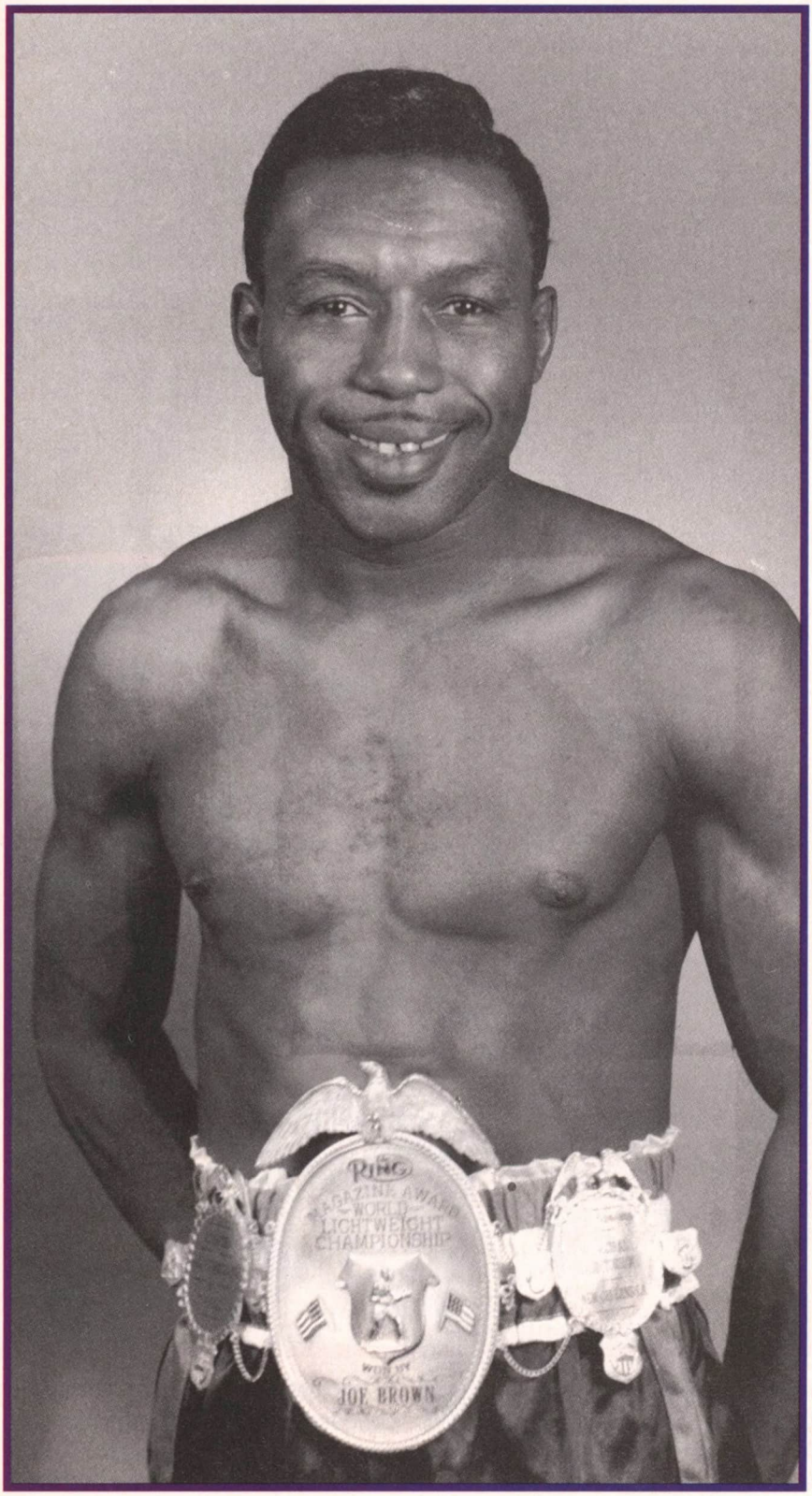
Saoul Mamby recently fought at age 60, but it wasn't necessary. He had already established himself as one of boxing's foremost long-timers. Mamby still had the goods at age 41, when he upset rising star Glenwood Brown by split decision. Two years later, Mamby mustered up a ninth-round knockout of former IBF titlist Gary Hinton. Mamby's days of being an old spoiler ended at 43, when he earned a split decision over undefeated prospect Larry Barnes. From there, he continued the traditional routine of old pugs, traveling the world and fighting wherever he could make a buck, coming up on the losing end more often than not. He blamed his association with Don King for leaving him broke, hence the constant travel and fighting. But Mamby had been a busy road warrior long before his time with King, so our guess is that traveling and fighting was ingrained in Mamby as a way of life ... Junior welterweight champion **Eddie Perkins** retired at 38 after four consecutive losses, but the year prior to that he was still a formidable presence at 140, notching his second win over the more youthful Armando Muniz, and traveling to Tokyo to beat popular Japanese contender Ryu Sorimachi ... It's easy to forget that **Micky Ward** was getting on in years during his trilogy with Arturo Gatti. Ward qualifies as a long-timer, having his most memorable fights after the age of 35 ... ESPN favorite **Harold Brazier** was a monument of durability, fighting until he was 49.

Mamby cracks Monroe Brooks with a right en route to a decision victory



LIGHTWEIGHT

Joe Brown



"Old Bones" fought on until he was 44

On April 24, 1968, a popular Port Arthur, Texas, southpaw named Vic Graffio climbed into a ring in Beaumont, Texas, to face a 42-year-old former champion, Joe Brown. Graffio was on a 13-fight undefeated streak, and Brown was supposed to be just another victim. In the eighth round, the fight was stopped, but it was Graffio who was in trouble, leaning on the ropes with blood flowing down his chest.

"The old man can still punch with that right," Graffio said days later. Graffio, in need of plastic surgery after Brown's right-handed assault, announced his retirement and never fought again. He probably figured there was no point in continuing if he couldn't beat a 42-year-old. But Brown was no ordinary 42-year-old.

After winning the lightweight championship in 1956 at age 30, Brown was told by a promoter that a flashy nickname was required if he hoped to be noticed during those gaudy days of television. "Joe Brown" sounded too plain. Even in his younger days he had trouble securing fights because no promoter wanted "Joe Brown" on a marquee. Hence, Brown took to calling himself "Old Bones."

Brown was a prolific champion, making 11 defenses and also taking part in 16 non-title bouts. He'd been a slick boxer in his early days, scoring only four knockouts in his first 30 fights, but as he aged, he became more of a puncher—four of his first five title defenses ended inside the distance.

In 1961, the nearly 35-year-old Brown traveled to Earls Court Arena, in Kensington, England, to take on the top British lightweight, Dave Charnley. This was a rematch of a bout fought three years earlier in Texas. On that night, Brown won via TKO when Charnley was badly cut.

This time, British officials allowed Charnley to fight through the blood, but he lost on points after 15 rounds. The British fans began hurling bottles at Brown as he left the ring, but the aging globetrotter took it in stride. He'd just been part of THE RING's 1961 Fight of the Year and was happy for the win.

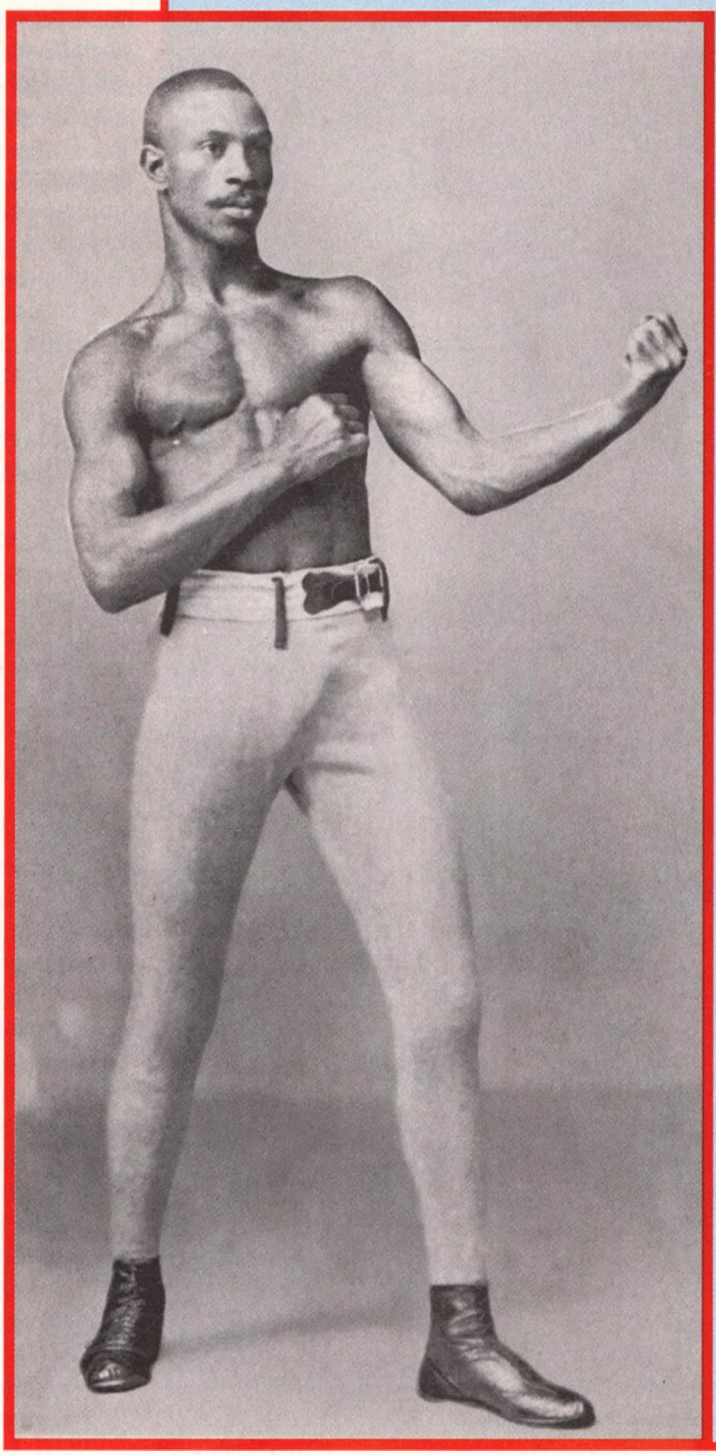
Brown finally lost the title to Carlos Ortiz in Las Vegas, just a few weeks shy of his 36th birthday. He continued fighting until 1970, traveling the world and earning his bones the only way he knew how—by meeting all comers.

Brown had more losses than wins during this later period, but now and then he'd turn the clock back and rattle off three or four wins in a row. During a stretch from August 1966 to April 1969, he was 6-1 (3). He wasn't taking easy assignments at the end either. He was fighting young bucks like Jessie Garcia and Chango Carmona. Brown had his final bout at age 44, a points loss to Dave Oropeza in Phoenix, Arizona. At the time, he didn't realize it was his final fight. He was still checking the newspapers for future opponents.

We imagine Brown's extended career came about partly because recognition and stardom came so late. He may have been a soft-spoken man from Louisiana, but in his heart he wanted a bit of the Ray Robinson lifestyle. Brown wanted to ride around in a long flashy car and wear expensive suits, just like Robinson. And for a while, Old Bones did exactly that.

Honorable Mention

Benny Bass had been recognized as the NYSAC featherweight and junior lightweight titlist at various times during the 1920s, but it was not until 1934, at the age of 30, that he began a campaign at lightweight. Often fighting men younger and larger than him, the "Little Fish" ran up 12 consecutive wins from 1935 to 1937, including a points win over future welterweight champ Red Cochrane. Bass finally retired at age 36 after 241 professional bouts ... Lightweight **Bobby Dobbs** was a man whose life and career was a mystery. An African-American from Tennessee, Dobbs had approximately 190 bouts, although he bragged that the number was closer to 1,000. His last official bout was in 1914, when he was 44. From there he traveled with carnivals as part of a boxing booth, meeting all challengers well into his 50s. The mystery around Dobbs involves his actual age. Most records have him born in 1869, but there are reports of him fighting as early as 1875. Either he had his first bout at age six, or he was actually much older than his reported age, which makes him that much more impressive ... Currently, a pair of 36-year-olds, **Joel Casamayor** and **Nate Campbell**, are dominating the lightweight class, but what would they think of **Kenny Lane**, a pretty good lightweight himself who retired in 1965 but returned in the 1980s and had his final bout at age 53? In his prime, Lane had lost in his championship bid to Joe Brown. Prior to their bout, Lane had teased Brown for being an old man.



The mysterious Dobbs claimed to have had close to 1,000 bouts

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

Azumah Nelson

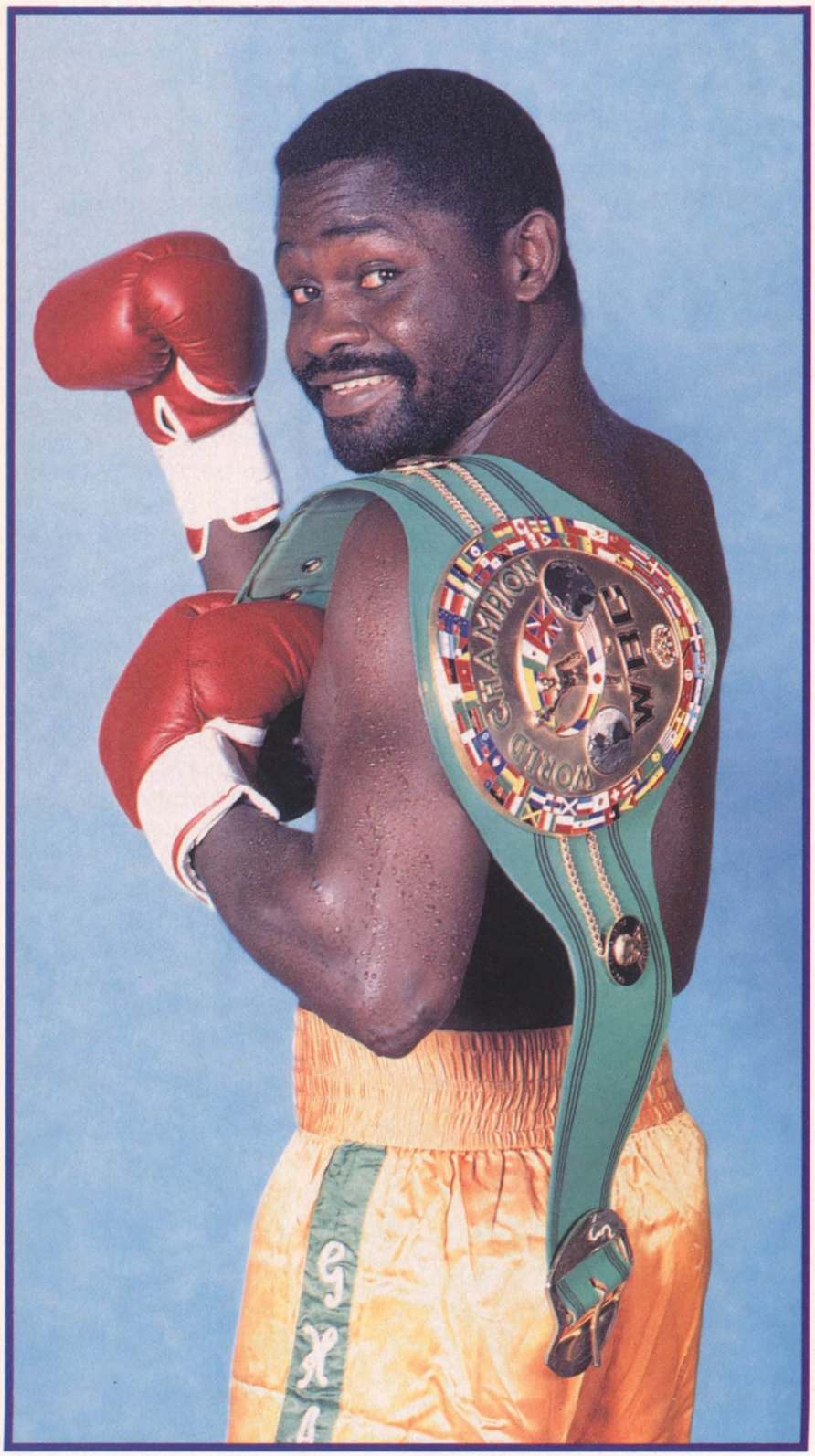


PHOTO BY AL BELLO

Nelson became much more than a boxing hero in his native Ghana

It's inevitable that a fighter given a nickname such as "The Professor" is destined for a long career. Azumah Nelson certainly was, fighting until he was 39.

Nelson could've retired much earlier. In 1992, he was thought to be finished when he escaped with a draw against Jeff Fenech. He avenged the Fenech draw by stopping the Aussie in eight. THE RING called that one the Upset of the Year, which shows how far we thought Nelson had fallen. But there was something about The Professor we hadn't considered. In his native country of Ghana, he had become a superstar.

To the poor citizens of Ghana, Nelson had become part celebrity athlete, part tribal chief, and part real estate developer. He was Ghana's Michael Jordan, Doctor Phil, and Donald Trump—all in one package. Ghana had a boxing tradition, but no Ghanaian ever flew higher than Nelson. When he went into the ring, he seemed to carry the hopes of Ghana in his heart. "If I have to come to your hometown, you're in trouble," Nelson told *The New York Times*. "I have nobody behind me. I fight like I'm crazy."

Nelson came from Bokum, a province of Ghana in northwestern Africa. Nelson once said of his national pride, "It's like your walking with your father or even your mother and someone is trying to beat them. You will fight for them. So, I went into ring with the mind that I have to defend my country with my life."

A loss to Jesse James Leija made it seem as if the ageless African was at the end of the line, but at 36 he won his third title, stopping Gabe Ruelas for the WBC junior welterweight belt. At 37, he butchered Leija, stopping him in six. But in 1997, Nelson lost the title via a split decision to Genaro Hernandez.

"People are worried about me," he said prior to his final fight. "They say, 'Azumah, you have been boxing

for a long time. When are you going to retire?' I am still going because I feel good. But I'm not going to go on forever. When I feel like I'm tired, I will quit."

With the Leija series at 1-1-1, a fourth bout was scheduled for July 1998. Once again, Nelson was fighting in someone else's hometown, as the bout was held in Leija's home city, San Antonio. Nelson lost by decision, but not without giving Leija a beating. *The Times* wrote, "After the fight, Leija's face looked as if he had stuck his head into a hornet's nest. Big red lumps covered his forehead, and his right eye was completely closed." Had Nelson not broken his left hand in the fifth round, he might've gone out with a win. It was his final bout.

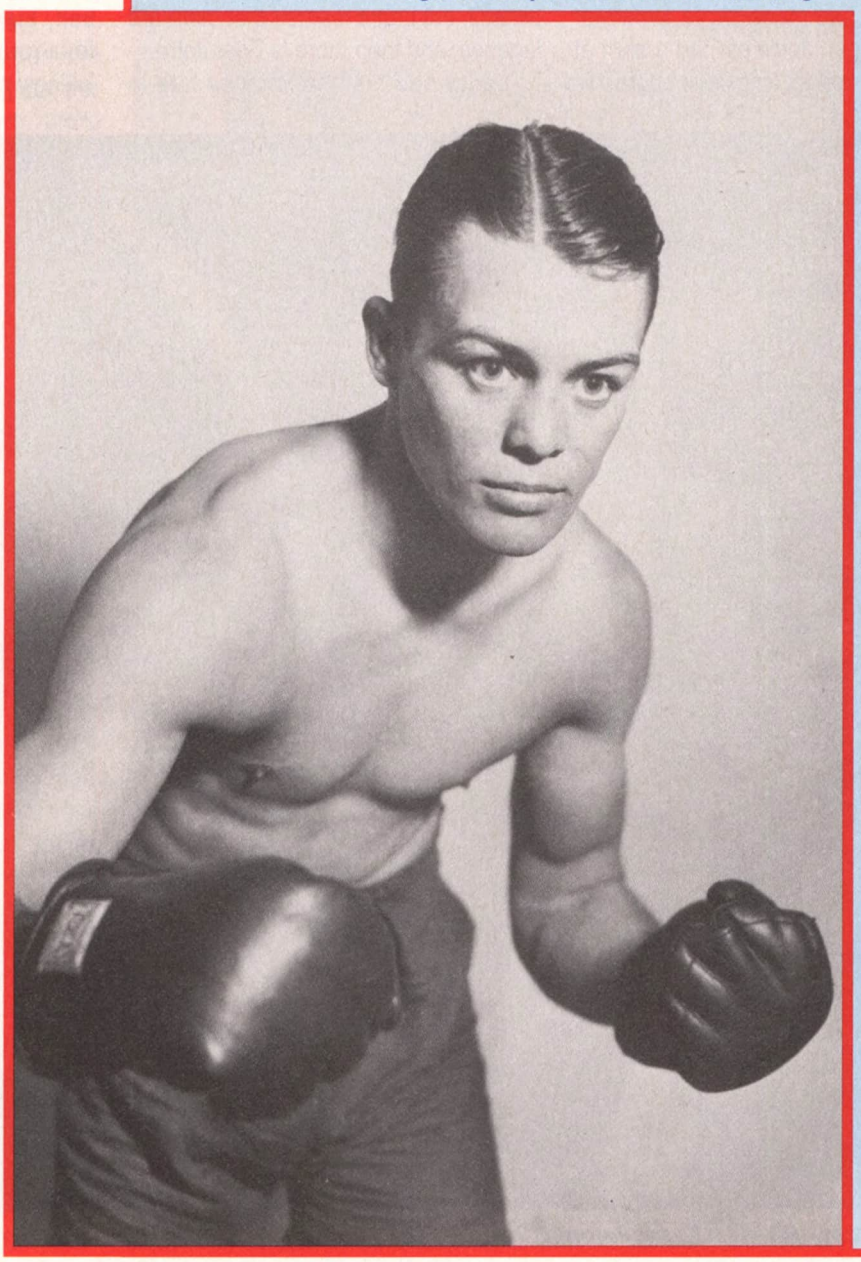
Nelson's father had wanted to box professionally, but his parents would not allow it. Instead, Emanuel Nelson became a tailor, occasionally fighting unregulated bouts in the shadows of Ghana. Perhaps Azumah, as noble and pious a man as has ever laced up the gloves, considered his career as a sort of homage to the man who brought him to his first fight. Azumah retired shortly after the death of his father, but he maintains a high profile in Ghana.

"I want to be able to build homes for the elderly here, schools for the street children and gyms for boxing and soccer. All the things my parents couldn't do for me I'd like to do for the rest of the people," Nelson said. Most recently, he created the Azumah Nelson Foundation to help needy children in his home district. There is talk that Nelson plans to enter the ring one more time at age 50 to fight his old foe Fenech, a full 16 years since they last fought. Boxing fans don't need to see Nelson in the ring again, but the citizens of Ghana would probably treat it as a triumphant return.

Honorable Mention

Tod Morgan was an ageless wonder at 130, fighting until he was 39. Morgan did most of his fighting in Australia, but he was actually an American, born in Dungeness, Washington, and residing in Seattle. Spreading 221 bouts over a 22-year career, Morgan finally retired in 1942 after outpointing a fighter ironically named "Young" Lew Edwards at Melbourne Stadium. Want more irony? Edwards retired after that fight too. He was only 30 ... **Jesse James Leija** must've been inspired by Azumah Nelson, because he fought until age 38. Leija had a lot working against him as he aged. He had paper-thin skin and a relatively light punch. What he did have was guts and cunning, and that kept him in the game a long time. At 37 he earned a split decision over up-and-coming contender Francisco Bojado ... Like Nelson, **Flash Elorde** of the Philippines carried the hopes of his countrymen into the ring every time he fought. He lasted until age 36.

Morgan had 221 pro bouts before he retired at age 39



FEATHERWEIGHT

Eder Jofre

Eder Jofre was already a legendary bantamweight when he ended a two-year retirement to resume his career at age 33. No longer willing to make 118, Jofre set his sights on the featherweight class.

Fighting exclusively in his home country of Brazil, Jofre lined up 14 trialhorses and beat them all, eight by knockout. As his comeback rolled along, it was clear that he still had the skills and the power, as well as the killer instinct that had made him a superstar in Brazil. When Jofre earned a shot at WBC featherweight king Jose Legra, his countrymen had faith that the wiry old featherweight would emerge victorious.

It was an intense atmosphere inside the Brasilia Sports Palace the night Jofre fought Legra. The arena was at its capacity of 25,000, with fans chanting "Eder! Eder! Brazil! Brazil!" (So fanatical was Jofre's following that referee Jay Edson had already been threatened with death if Legra were to win.) The Cuba-born Legra was confident. After all, he had also forged a legendary career for himself, but Legra learned that there are legends, and then there is Eder Jofre.

Legra had his best chance late in the third when he cracked Jofre on the chin with a right cross. The Brazilian star's knees buckled and he stumbled into the ropes. Legra was on him, but fortune smiled on Jofre in the form of a timely bell to end the round. From there, Jofre regrouped and outpointed Legra, winning a split 15-round decision. At 37, Jofre was the one of the oldest title winners in any division.

Five months later Jofre made his first and only defense of the featherweight belt, blasting out Vicente Saldivar in four rounds. American sportswriters jokingly called it "the battle of the senior

Jofre celebrates his 1962 TKO of Herman Marquez In San Francisco

citizens"—Saldivar was 30, Jofre was 37. That shows you two things: Not only have we adjusted our thoughts about age, but there was a time in America when sportswriters actually followed featherweight boxing.

After whipping Saldivar, it looked as if Jofre was going to dominate the feathers just as he had once dominated the bantams. Unfortunately, while Jofre was able to stave off Mother Nature, he was no match for boxing politics. The WBC stripped him of the title for not fighting top contender Alfredo Marcano. Some accused Jofre of avoiding Marcano because he didn't think his aging body could withstand Marcano's youthful slugging; others reported that Jofre and Marcano's managers simply couldn't come to financial terms.

Regardless, Jofre continued the second leg of his amazing career without a title, winning seven more bouts and retiring at 40. His popularity was still soaring—when he fought it was common for the bell to go unheard over the roar of his loyal Brazilian fans. He boasted that he would soon challenge for a third title, and the way he looked against Enzio Farinelli made believers of most.

"Jofre hits like a bombshell," Farinelli told the Associated Press. Jofre had dropped him four times in 11 minutes, forcing the Italian's corner to throw in the towel. "All my plans of stalling for time to get him in the late rounds went down the drain because the man was furious and incredibly fast. He is unique among guys his size."

And age.

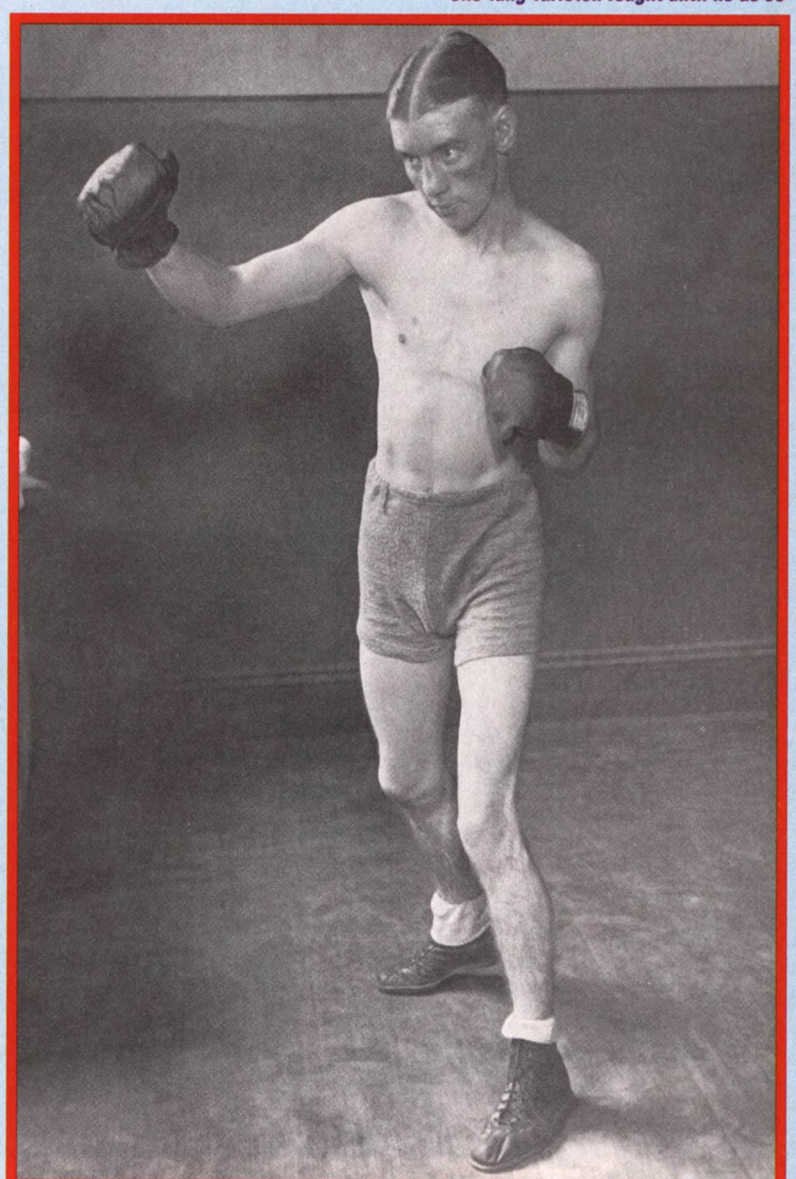
How did an ex-bantam-turned-featherweight fight so effectively until 40? For one thing, Jofre came from a family of athletes. Ten of his uncles were fighters, and his dad had fought for a while in Brazil. Even one of Jofre's aunts was a popular female wrestler in Argentina. Genetics obviously played a major part in Jofre's longevity.

Jofre also thrived on being a public figure, even making a successful run for mayor of Sao Paulo. A combination of strong genes and the boost that comes from an adoring public helped make Jofre one of boxing's premiere long-timers.

Honorable Mention

You don't find many long-timers once you get into the lighter divisions, but there have been a few featherweights who qualify as real iron men. **Johnny Dundee** fought until he was 39, which was ancient for a Depression-era featherweight. Dundee's achievement was particularly special because he couldn't bail himself out with a strong punch. Instead, he had to go the distance more than 300 times ... British featherweight hero **Nel Tarleton** also lasted until his 39th year, but his longevity was doubly impressive because he did it with only one working lung. Contracting tuberculosis as a child, Tarleton had been a thin, weak boy. He took up boxing to improve his self-confidence after being pushed around on the rugby field by healthier boys. He boxed professionally for 19 years. Like Dundee, he didn't have much kick in his gloves, so the one-lung wonder went the distance for most of his 146 career bouts. He won his final contest in 1945, a 15-round points win over a much younger Al Phillips.

One-lung Tarleton fought until he as 39



BANTAMWEIGHT

Panama Al Brown

How do we explain the longevity of Panama Al Brown? He was a 5'11" bantamweight built like a mantis; he was so thin it seemed that the wind from a punch would knock him over, especially since he fought such sturdy brutes as Batt Battalino and Eugene Criqui. Brown seemed to literally float around the ring, while opponents lumbered after him. Trying to hit him cleanly was like trying to hit a piece of confetti as it wafted in a breeze. Meanwhile, his punches came sweeping across from all angles, leaving his opponents bleeding and bewildered.

According to legend, Brown also suffered from tuberculosis. Some biographers claim he had it since his childhood; others say he contracted it later on. Either way, he was a thin, sickly fellow who managed to stay in the ring until he was 40 years old. For Depression-era bantams, the age of 40 may as well have been 60.

Brown's career was turbulent. Unable to get good fights in America, he spent the bulk of his career fighting in Europe and South America. But as popular as he was overseas, more than a few of his bouts ended with fans rioting at ringside. Brown's rubbery, elusive style often made it look as if he was toying with opponents. After one bout was stopped when the

Despite poor health, Panama Al Brown fought until he was 40

referee disqualified him for loafing, Brown was attacked by angry customers and sent to the hospital with a concussion.

Still, boxing was Brown's ticket to wealth and fame. In 1938, at age 35, he was recognized as the bantamweight champion by the IBU of Europe after a decision win over Baltazar Sagchili in Paris. His next bout, a non-title win over French slugger Valentin Anglemann, showed he was still sharp. *The New York Times* reported, "When the Negro veteran, whom Frenchmen call 'The Black Widow Spider,' had danced through the first five rounds, Angelmann's bewildered, battered expression showed that the Panamanian had won. Brown's right finished the fight in the eighth, sending the Frenchman flat for the count of 10."

Making weight was becoming a chore for Brown, so he dumped the IBU honors and resumed his career as a featherweight. But Brown's problems were not limited to making weight. He'd invested most of his fortune in real estate, spending it on German occupied French land. As World War II heated up, Brown cut his losses and fled Europe.

He fought a pair of bouts in New York, but immigration authorities arrested him when his work visa expired. While being questioned, he was busted for possession of narcotics. In front of a New York judge, Brown maintained that injuries received from boxing had driven him to use drugs. He was deported, spending the last years of his career in Panama.

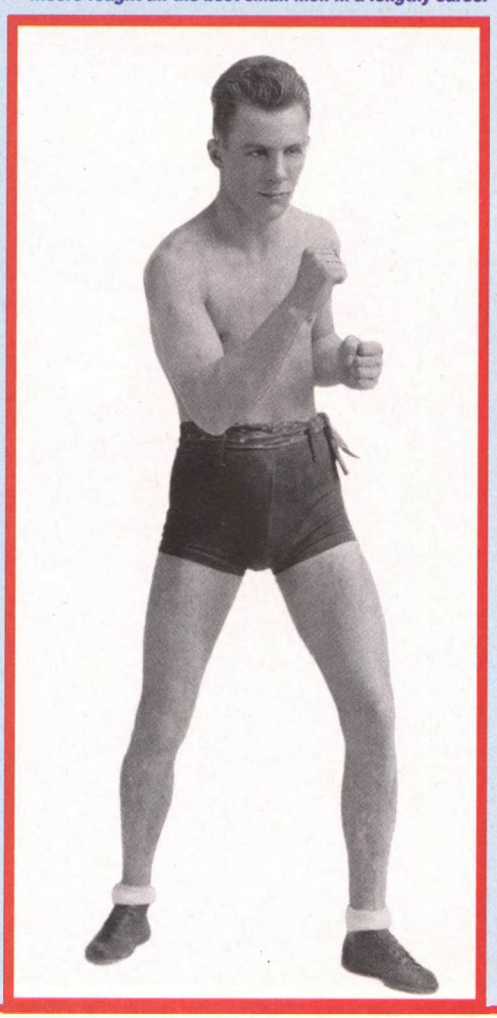
Even as his reflexes slowed, he could still use his monstrous 76-inch arm span to outbox opponents and entertain his Canal Zone fans in Panama City. His final bout was a 10-round decision win over Kid Fortune in Brown's home city of Colon, Panama, where he'd begun his career 20 years earlier.

Boxing fans must have been surprised when Brown was pronounced dead just eight years after he quit the ring. They hadn't known he was wasting away at a Staten Island, New York, sanitarium, a stroke adding to his many health problems. His fans probably thought he was still fighting somewhere in the world, using his brilliant jab to remind everyone that he was still the class of the lower divisions.

Honorable Mention

A contemporary of Brown's was **"Memphis" Pal Moore**, a bantam who was still punching two weeks prior to his 36th birthday. He'd fought all of the best small men in a career that spanned 253 fights, including Jimmy McLarnin, Joe Lynch, and Fidel Labarba. The key to Moore's longevity was probably sheer skill—he'd been a highly decorated amateur during his U.S. Navy hitch ... We're not exactly sure where to place bantamweight Hall of Famer **Manuel Ortiz**. He fought until he was 39, but his final bouts were as a bloated junior welterweight ... Denmark's **Johnny Bredahl** was not only a multiple belt winner, he fought until he was 37. He retired with the WBA strap in his possession, still weighing in at 118 for his final bout ... Super bantamweight **Daniel Zaragoza** belongs on any list of long-timers, remaining a top-caliber champion until losing the WBC title at age 38. One of his great late-career performances was a split decision victory over a much younger Wayne McCullough. Along with his considerable boxing skills, Zaragoza had one of the most basic ingredients required for a long career: He was tougher than a gargoyle ... Currently, Thailand's **Veerapol Sahaprom** is still one of the top bantamweights at 39. There must be something in the air in Thailand, because Sahaprom's bantamweight countryman, **Chatchai Sasakul**, is still fighting hard at 38.

Moore fought all the best small men in a lengthy career



FLYWEIGHT

Pascual Perez

Flyweights usually have a lifespan in boxing only slightly longer than an actual fly, but one of the all-time greats, Pascual Perez, was also one of the longest lasting. After losing the championship to Pone Kingpetch at a creaky 33, Perez continued boxing until he was nearly 38, an awesome age for a flyweight to still be competing.

After losing to Kingpetch a second time, Perez barnstormed around Argentina, bringing his hard-punching style to the fans that still yearned to see his 4'11" body in action. From Cordoba to Buenos Aires, to Rio Negro and every backwater in between, Perez was drawing crowds. Prior to Perez, flyweights were not known for their excitement, but as Associated Press columnist Jim Becker once joked, "Perez broke all of the flyweight union rules. He fought like he was mad or something."

During a two-year stretch, from 1961 to 1963, the aging Perez was incredibly active, defeating 30 opponents, most by knockout. True, he was not beating fighters of great distinction, but good flyweights were scarce in the early-1960s. Perez stayed active by beating novices, sometimes two per month, not only to cash in on his great popularity in Argentina (he was the first Argentine to win a world title), but he was also seriously campaigning for a third bout with Kingpetch.

Their first bout had been a painfully close split decision loss for Perez in Bangkok, Thailand. The rematch was at the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles, and this time Perez was stopped in eight

Perez eyes Kenji Yonekura over a cup of coffee after signing for a fight in Tokyo

rounds. "I think I can beat him if we fight again," Perez said. "I just want him in the ring one more time."

Perez knew he couldn't go on knocking off stiffs in his home country. If he wanted Kingpetch, he had to leave home and fight some real competition. Things started badly with a split-decision loss in Venezuela to Leo Zueleto, an undistinguished journeyman. A win over Manuel Moreno in Panama convinced Perez he was back on track. Then came the inevitable disaster. Testing the waters against a young, quality opponent, Perez met Bernardo Caraballo, an undefeated Colombian. Caraballo destroyed Perez over 10 rounds, beating him worse than Kingpetch ever did. Caraballo nearly stopped Perez in the second round, cut him over the eyes, and pounded him until the final bell.

During his final year as a professional fighter, Perez lost four out of eight fights. After he suffered consecutive knockout losses to a pair of rookies, people openly worried about his health. No less an authority on aging fighters than Archie Moore spoke up.

"It's long past time for ex-flyweight champion Pascual Perez to hang up his gloves," Moore wrote in his weekly syndicated column. "The once mighty mite from Argentina was a marvelous fighter in his heyday, but his heyday is long past. When the lion-hearted little Latin was stopped by an unknown named Eugenio Hurtado in Panama recently, a tragedy may well have been but a punch away. Perez has been unmercifully battered by opponents who couldn't have lived in the same ring with him in his prime. If ever a man should quit, the time is now for Pascual Perez."

Perez learning that his father had died while he was in Panama compounded the loss to Hurtado. Finally, the Argentine Boxing Federation ordered Perez to undergo a thorough medical examination before allowing him to fight again. He refused the examination, and announced his retirement.

***Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and regular contributor to* THE RING.**

Honorable Mention

Another hard-hitting flyweight titlist who fought forever was Venezuela's **Betulio Gonzales**. He followed the Perez model, losing the WBA title at 30 and then fighting exclusively in his home turf until he could punch no more. He was 39 at the time of his final bout, a TKO loss to Rodolfo Blanco in 1988 ... There are a number of flyweights working today who are also following the path of Perez. **Muhammad Rachman** is still fighting at 36, as is **Bert Batawang** of the Philippines. Thailand's **Pramuansak Posuwan** is 39 ... **Ricardo Lopez** was 35 when he retired as the undefeated minimumweight champion in 2004. He may have weighed only 105 pounds, but it was 105 pounds of iron. That he was one of the greatest little men of all-time is unquestionable. But he also fought better for a longer period of time than most men under 110. Other small fighters may surpass him in age, but those who last longer probably won't fight as well, and those who fight as well, probably won't last as long.

Lopez was still undefeated when he retired

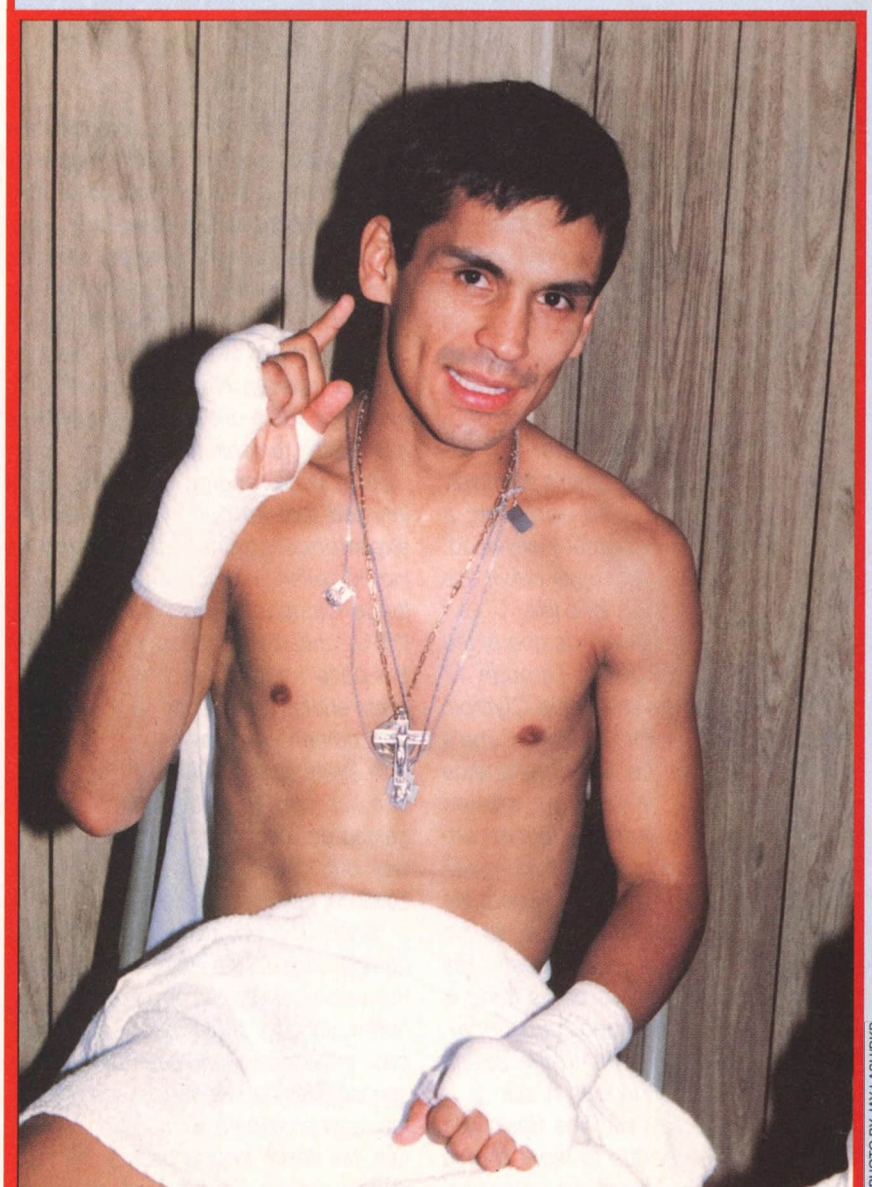


PHOTO BY JAY LASH/DKP

Amir Khan

"I Want To Be The New Floyd Mayweather ... From England"

Amir Khan is a 21-year-old boxer in a hurry. The winner of an Olympic silver medal in Athens when he was just 17, the Commonwealth lightweight champion from Bolton, England, would like to challenge for the world lightweight title this year. In April he attended Joe Calzaghe's world light heavyweight title fight against Bernard Hopkins in Las Vegas, and in a round-table discussion with American reporters, Frank Warren, Khan's promoter, announced that he had agreed to a multi-fight deal with Planet Hollywood. Khan could make his Vegas debut this year before challenging for a title.

Khan is widely viewed as one of the top prospects in boxing. Through 17 bouts since he reversed his Olympic final defeat on points against Cuba's Mario Kindelan in his final appearance as an amateur, Khan has stayed unbeaten. His greatest qualities are self-evident: good balance, fluid movement, and formidable hand speed. He wields considerable power, too, as his record of 14 stoppages suggests. His appetite for the violence of his trade is encrusted with diamond-hard nerve. Make no mistake: Beneath the boyish veneer there lurks a vicious streak.

But the prodigy still has flaws. He admits that he needs to work on his defense. Willie Limond, an ostensibly light hitter from Scotland, induced the most serious crisis of Khan's career by flooring him in the sixth round of their July 2007 bout, which Khan won when he pulverized Limond over the next two rounds before the Scot retired on his stool at the end of round eight. What, then, might a proven puncher, such as Florida veteran Nate Campbell, who has stopped 25 of the 32 opponents he has beaten, be able to do?

In a wide-ranging interview, Khan insisted that he had learned from his experience against Limond and he would relish the opportunity to challenge Campbell, who holds the WBA, WBO, and IBF lightweight titles. "With the pace I fight at and the amount of clean shots I land, along with my speed and power—my power is developing with every fight—I'd love to fight someone like him because he's slow, he's getting on a bit, and, really, he's on the way out," Khan declared. Certainly, he does not lack for confidence.

Brian Doogan, THE RING's European correspondent, sat alongside Khan as the unbeaten boxer drove around his home city and spoke about his eagerness to become world champion, the responsibilities he has had to face up to as the most prominent young Muslim in Britain, his desire to give back to his community, and his plans to bring on board a new trainer, who will possibly be an American, after splitting with Oliver Harrison and linking up, at least temporarily, with Dean Powell. Doogan reports:

"Amir is a young man who has experienced a lot in his life already, from his remarkable journey in Athens that made him an overnight sensation in Britain, to the reality of how his religion impacts on a modern, multicultural society. Throughout it all, he has remained remarkably clearheaded and unaffected by his celebrity status. His father, Shah, and his business manager, Asif Vali, are good people who look after his career, along with promoter Frank Warren. Khan remains a hugely appealing product of the working-class town in northern England in which he grew up, the kind of young man who would give a lift home to a woman and her son if they were struggling to carry home their shopping. In fact, he did as we sat in the car, just before beginning this interview."

The Ring: You're in training to box Michael Gomez, the former British super featherweight champion. Gomez was once seen as a fighter with a lot of potential, but he has lost several fights, and his commitment has been brought into question. Two years ago he turned his back on Peter McDonagh and quit

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

in the middle of the fifth round. What do you think he will bring into this fight against you?

Amir Khan: He's a good opponent for me, a tough fighter with a lot of heart, despite what happened against McDonagh. I don't know the reason why that happened, but I know that throughout his career he has been the kind of guy you could put down and he would still come forward. He has a good knockout ratio, he's had 38 fights and he's knocked out 24 opponents, which is more people than I've had fights. So he has a lot of experience and it's a step up for me. It will take me to the next level because he has boxed at world level and he has trained with world-class fighters like Ricky Hatton. This makes me go to the gym, train hard and work hard. I want to have my first world title fight before the end of this year and this fight stands in the way of that, so I'm not taking Gomez lightly at all.

The Ring: This will be your first fight since the end of your relationship with Oliver Harrison, who had trained you from before your professional debut. Your father, Shah, and business manager, Asif Vali, revealed that a breakdown in communications lay behind the split. From your point of view, what happened?

AK: I really don't know what was behind it. I know that we tried to arrange a meeting to sort things out, but Oliver did not turn up. There were some tensions in the camp, but I had to focus on my fight against Martin Kristjansen (on April 5, a fight in which Khan stopped the Dane in the seventh round), so I couldn't let these things get to me. I left it to the family to sort out. They tried to get in touch with him after that, but they couldn't. That's all I really know about it.

The Ring: Dean Powell, Frank Warren's matchmaker, who has worked in the gym with titleholders Duke McKenzie and Lloyd Honeyghan and has also served as a cornerman for Joe Calzaghe and Nigel Benn, is now training you. How is that working?

AK: It's been brilliant. We've been working on me moving my feet better, not leaving as big a gap between my legs, so I've closed that gap and I move both feet together now, whereas, I used to leave the back foot sometimes when I would throw a jab, which created the gap. So I've been working on stuff like that. Another guy who told me about this exact same thing ages ago was Freddie Roach. He told me that I was leaving too great a gap in my stance and that was taking away from my power. I have knocked people out from the very start of my career, but I'll have much more power if I hold my feet right.

The Ring: The general assumption is that your work with Dean is transitional and not necessarily for the long-term. After your next fight, what are you thinking? You mentioned Freddie Roach and you've also worked with Roger Mayweather. Buddy McGirt's name has also been brought up.

AK: You never know, I might be happy with Dean and I might think that

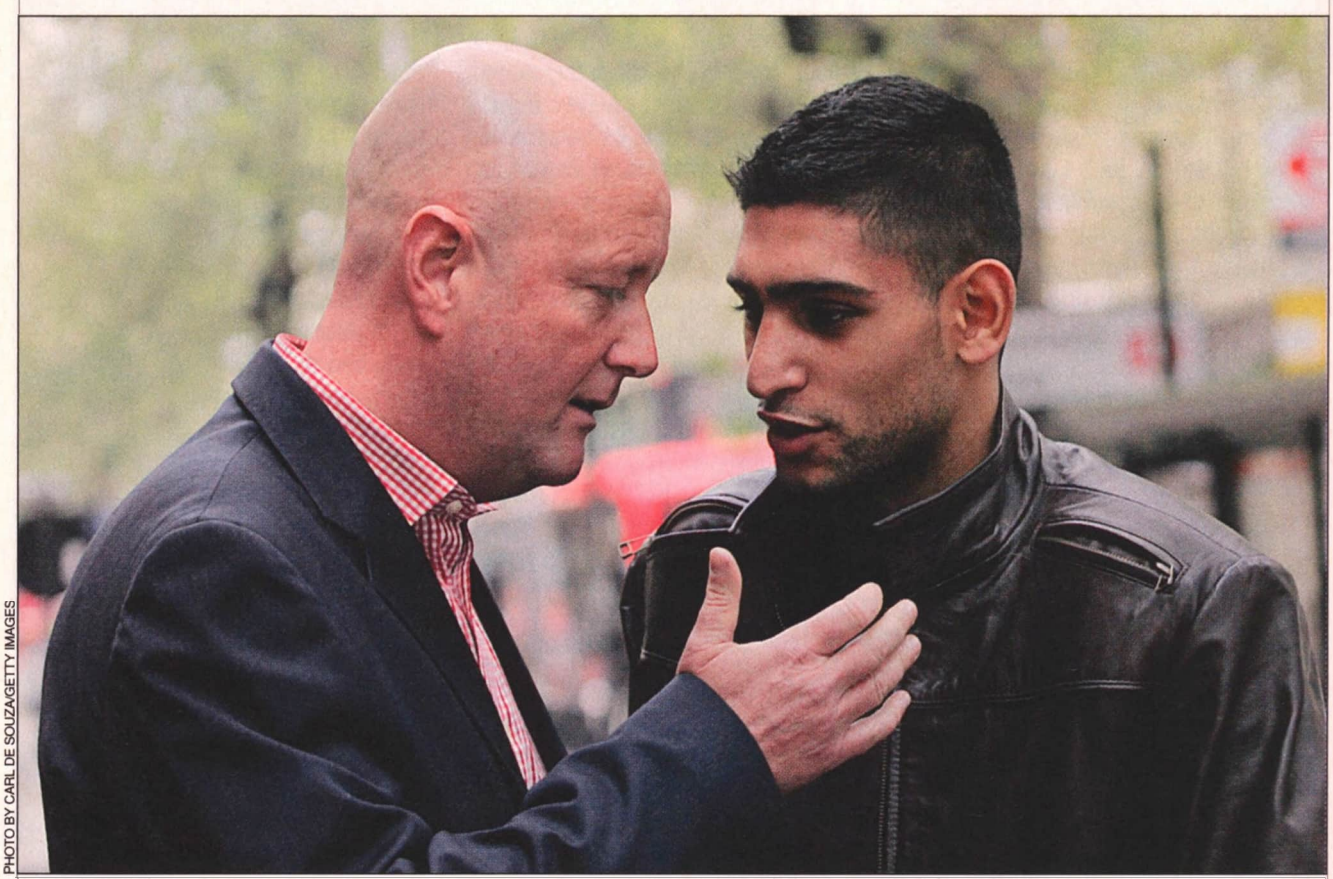


PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/GETTY IMAGES

A change in the corner: Khan speaks with his new trainer, Dean Powell, who recently replaced Oliver Harrison. Harrison had trained the undefeated lightweight since he began his pro career. Khan blames the split on a breakdown in communications.

PHOTO BY LEON NEAL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Khan has streaked to 17 consecutive victories since winning a silver medal at the 2004 Olympic Games. One of the four opponents to last the distance was Gairy St. Clair, who lost a unanimous 12-round decision to Khan in February 2008.

he can take me to where I want to get. Dean has taught me knew things, which I have found hard to do, only because I had never done them before, like keeping my hands in the correct position and moving with my hands up and keeping my feet together, stuff like that. I have really enjoyed the work because I love learning, especially if I know it's going to help me. Only today, he said to me that he cannot believe how quickly I can pick up something, learn it, and implement it.

The Ring: When you were out in Las Vegas, you went to work at the Mayweather Gym with Roger Mayweather.

AK: Working with Roger Mayweather was great and it opened up my mind to the fact that defensive work is really important and I really need to work on it. Floyd Mayweather came to the gym as well and he made suggestions while Roger took me on he pads. Normally, Floyd would be asleep at 11 a.m., but he got up especially to see me train and he was in the ring, telling me what to do. He showed me a lot of respect and said that he knew I was fast and strong. The only thing that I lack is experience and that shows in my record, but that's it. I've got everything else: power, speed, everything. When the experience comes, I'll be realizing all of my goals, that's the way it will be. At the moment, I know that Frank Warren is putting the brakes on me because he knows that I'm still young and I'm one of these people who wants to try to rush and win everything too quickly.

The Ring: Can you understand where Frank is coming from?

AK: I understand exactly where Frank is coming from, but sometimes you have to take chances, and I say that to the people around me because that will bring more out of me. Definitely. When I know that it's a 50-50 fight, it will bring a lot more out of me because I love to prove people wrong. I've done that from Day One.

The Ring: But you acknowledge yourself that you need to work on your defense.

AK: I've said that I need to work on defense and that was one of the areas Floyd Mayweather and Roger helped me on. The more experience I get, the easier you see everything, such as why you get put on the floor. That's where experience comes from, so for this fight against Gomez I'm working on my defense a lot. Roger was telling me what to do on the pads, and it's work that I've never done before. I only have myself to blame for this. I can't blame the coach; it's me. I should have said it to the coach. Maybe they didn't see it, but I should have told them.

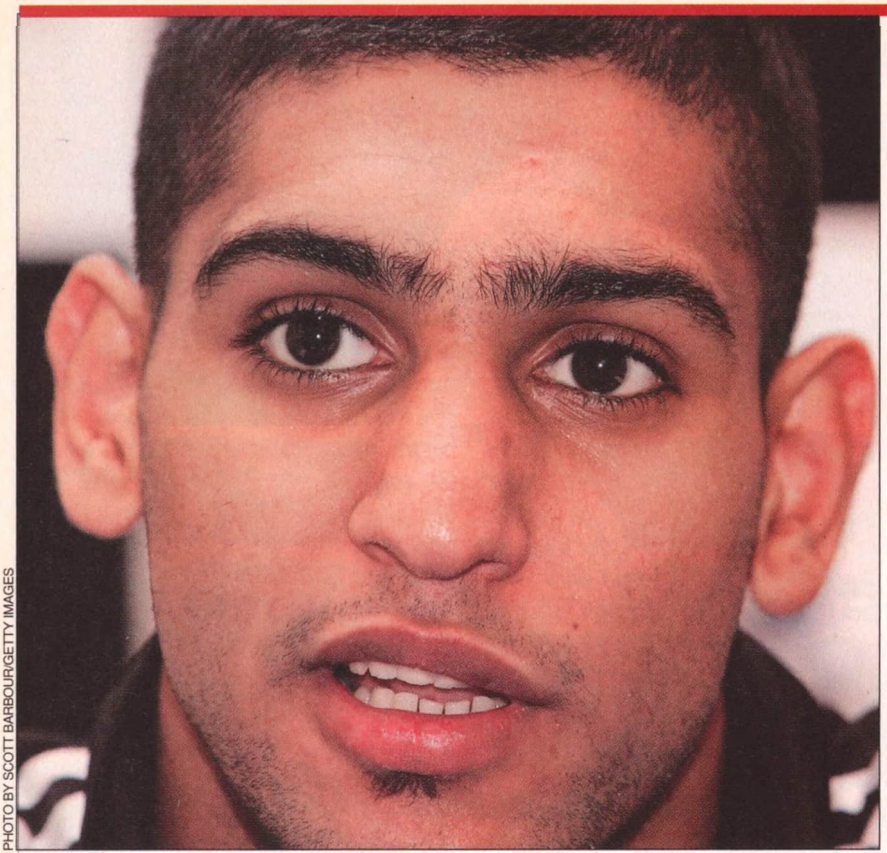


PHOTO BY SCOTT BARBOUR/GETTY IMAGES

> **"I read what [Nate Campbell] said, and I like that because I want these people to know who I am. This shows that my name is out there and these people know that I'm a threat to them ... They can say what they want, that I'm rubbish and I'm still a kid, but they're saying that only because they see me as a threat and, deep down, they're scared."**

The Ring: Do you still want to fight for a world title by the end of the year or would you be prepared to wait? It seems that you're going through a bit of a transition in your career, so perhaps you need to settle things down for a period of time before you make that leap.

AK: I'm still looking to fight for the title at the end of the year. I want to become world champion this year, that's my goal. I said when I set out that by the time of the next Olympics, I want to be world champion. I won't quite have done that, but I don't want to wait much longer. It's just the way I am. I want to do things as quickly as possible, and I've seen other fighters do it as quickly as me, inside 18 or 20 fights, and they have also achieved it in four years, so why can't I?

The Ring: Let me read to you some of what Nate Campbell said about you recently: "Khan's a big fraud and all these guys are frauds. He hasn't fought anybody. It's all a mirage. He has to show the world that he is not a fraud. I'm the man and I have no problem with coming to England to fight him. But it's worth a lot of money and they will have to pay for it. Who has Khan fought? Willie Limond couldn't even punch and he almost knocked him out. So what's going to happen when he fights a guy who can box, throws in volume, can slug, has great defense, a great inside game, and a great outside game? He fights guys like Martin Kristjansen, who couldn't score a knockout with a hammer. Look at their knockout ratios, and then look at mine. Worried about Amir Khan? I'm only worried about how much they're going to pay me." What do you think of that?

AK: I read what he had said and I like that because I want these people to know who I am. This shows that my name is out there and these people know that I'm a threat to them. People know who Amir Khan is and I want those guys, especially, to know who I am. They can say what they want, that I'm rubbish and I'm still a kid, but they're saying that only because they see me as a threat and, deep down, they're scared. They're on the edge of their seat because they know that someone like myself is going to come along and take the title off them. They are taking notice of me and, if I was no good or if I was what they say I am, they would not even have to talk about me. That's the way I see it. But I am what I am and they fear me. That's why they talk about me and try to dismiss me as just a kid.

The Ring: When you look at world lightweight champion Joel Casamayor and titleholder Nate Campbell, do you see weaknesses?

AK: These guys are older than me and they have far more experience than I have, but they don't have the hand speed and power that I do. The big occasion will also make me work that bit harder. I believe that I can beat these guys. Campbell and Cassamayor are getting on and the lightweight division needs a young world champion, someone like myself, to come there and take the titles. I know they have more experience than I have, but that's me. I catch people by surprise. They don't know how fast I am or how strong I am. I hurt my opponents and I won't give them a chance. I'll make the most of it. If I fight one of these guys, I'll be ready for it.

The Ring: Some experts believe that you are one of the top two prospects in world boxing, along with Victor Ortiz.

AK: Not a lot of people know that I boxed Ortiz in the amateurs and I stopped him in the second round. I beat him in the 2003 Junior Olympic Games in Louisiana, and I remember the whole of the American team coming up to me and saying, "You're not going to beat this guy." But the guy didn't hit me once. He was the number-one guy and going into the fight he was unbeaten for so long, so the odds were completely against me. This is what the Americans were saying, but I didn't care because I knew what I could do. There was no amateur out there who could touch me at my age. I saw him in his last fight (against Dairo Esalas) and I thought he did fine. He got knocked down and he's been knocked down before, but that's boxing. Being knocked down doesn't mean that you don't have a chin. Oscar De La Hoya was put down twice early in his career. Ricky Hatton got knocked down by Eamon Magee, and look at what he achieved after that.

The Ring: There were some critics who suggested when you were knocked down last year by Willie Limond that this was a sign of you not having a great chin.

AK: I know that Willie Limond is not a big puncher and some people say that I don't have a chin. I've read this in newspapers and on the Internet, and it hurts me because I know that I can take a shot. Ask my sparring partners. I spar with guys who are a lot heavier than me, Jamie Moore and people like that. I've taken some big shots from some big people and they have never put me down. The thing about the fight with Limond is that I got caught with a shot that I didn't see. I got caught on the temple, but that shot didn't put me down. He had to hit me with six more clean shots after that before I went down on the canvas, and I got up straight away. My mind was fresh, so I can't go along with these people who say that I've got no chin.

The Ring: Your deal with Frank Warren's Sports Network is up for renewal after your next fight. What are your thoughts about that?

AK: I really like Frank, he's a nice guy and I have no complaints about how my career has been handled to this point. I also know that Frank can take me to where I want to get and I'd love to finish my career with Frank Warren and be with him all the way. I know that he will look after me, and being with an English promoter suits me. Frank has also guided the careers of the best fighters, like Joe Calzaghe, Naseem Hamed, and Ricky Hatton. He's had them all, hasn't he? Discussions being held with my family are ongoing and, hopefully, things will be sorted and an announcement made very soon.

The Ring: Frank has also negotiated a deal with Planet Hollywood, which suggests that you will fight in Las Vegas soon. Do you think that you will box in America after the fight against Gomez?

AK: I'd like to go over to the United States after this fight in Birmingham.

The Ring: Would it be in Las Vegas?

AK: It could be because I've heard about the Planet Hollywood deal. That would be great, and I want to fight in America because people know who I am, even though a lot of them have never seen me fight. They have watched me on TV, but they want to see me there live. It's a totally different experience. I went over to see Mayweather-De La Hoya, and what I'd seen of Mayweather on TV was really great, but when I saw him live I was able to appreciate just how amazing he is. There were things that I didn't have a proper appreciation for, like his hand speed and his accuracy. With Mayweather, every shot counts and he has power as well. When he hits you, he hurts you, and the people he's hitting have good chins. They're not just going to fall over. He's a master in terms of skill and footwork and, if there's a figher that I would love to be like, it would be Floyd Mayweather. Floyd will soon be on the way out and I want to be the new Floyd Mayweather ... from England.

The Ring: Do you study other fighters?

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AK: I love it, man, watching videos of other fighters, seeing things that they do and working on these myself, then using these skills in a fight. The way that Mayweather and De La Hoya throw their jabs and different combinations and the way that they keep their balance and the accuracy in whatever types of shot they throw, these are the things that I pick up on. Tommy Hearns, I've watched a lot of his fights because he was tall for his weight and I'm tall for a lightweight. I watch for how he coped against pressure fighters. Did he get stuck in or did he box clever? Most of the time he boxed clever. Mind is better than strength. If you have a clever head, no one will touch you. You don't have to be the strongest or the hardest hitting or the fastest. If you have a clever mind, no one can touch you.

I want to prove myself to people in America by fighting out there and fighting tough guys. Half of these people I'm fighting, I make it look easy because of the way I fight them. I could stand there and make it look brutal and bloody and messy, but I don't do that. I use my brain because I know that there are bigger fights for me in the future, so what's the point in me taking big shots in this early stage of my career? By the time that the big fights come, I would be finished. It's about hitting and not getting hit, and this doesn't mean that I'm chinny or I'm scared about taking punches. It's about being clever.

The Ring: What did you learn in the gyms in America?

PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The biggest crisis of Khan's career to date was when he was knocked down by Willie Limond in their July 2007 British Commonwealth lightweight title fight. Khan beat the count and rallied back to stop Limond in the eighth round, but critics still question his chin.

AK: With a guy like Freddie Roach, who has trained so many world champions, you know that everything he says is true, so you listen to him and you take it in more than the same thing being told to you by another coach. Freddie stressed that balance was so important. He could see that I had speed and power, so he concentrated on my balance. I wasn't in training at the time and I wasn't at my sharpest, but he still thought that I was tremendously quick and he also said that I was a quick learner, which Roger Mayweather said as well, but neither of them saw me in peak condition.

The Ring: You don't appear to allow yourself ever to get out of shape. Whenever we see you between fights at press conferences or in the gym, you're always in good shape.

AK: When I'm lean and in fighting shape, I weigh about 10 stone 3 pounds (143 pounds), but I was about 10 stone 5 pounds when I was in Las Vegas, and those extra two pounds make a difference. I like to stay in shape and, even when I'm not fighting, I will be out and about, doing different things and I'm active. I don't go out to bars or clubs. I've never touched a drink and smoking is not for me. Don't get me wrong, I go out with my friends and I enjoy myself, but that means going to a restaurant for a nice, healthy meal.

The Ring: Was there a time when you did not eat healthy foods?

AK: I was massively into my oily foods and fatty food, fried food such as fish and chips, burgers, and everything fatty because it tasted nice. Healthy food is not the tastiest food, but I realized that I had to sort out my act in terms of my diet if I am going to get to where I want to get. If I want to be strong and in the best condition and if I want my mind working, I need to eat properly, and in the last year I have sorted out this area by bringing in a nutritionist, Phil Richards (who worked previously with Bolton Wanderers in the English Premier League), who is also my strength and conditioning coach. I've been eating healthily and I've been drinking the right drinks, keeping hydrated, and this has helped me to make weight more quickly. I eat a lot of vegetables like broccoli, carrots, and peas. I eat salads and I cook my food in olive oil. I eat a lot of fish. My nutritionist checks my blood and he knows exactly what my body needs. He uses all these high-tech techniques that will take me to the next level. I have all the science behind me and Phil does everything outside boxing. The boxing coaches concentrate on the boxing. Phil looks after my diet, nutrition, supplements and the inside part. I do my body fat tests once a week.

The Ring: Your appeal and your success as an Olympian has helped to popularize the sport in Britain after boxing spent several years on the sporting periphery. Your dad told me that there are between 300 and 400 kids who come into your gym every week to box or just do the training, and, clearly, giving back to the community means a lot to you. Even the computers in your gym, which you make available to school kids, are benefiting people in the community.

AK: These are kids who we can help by providing these facilities, and the vast majority of them had never been inside a boxing gym before and they never would have gone, had it not been for them seeing me box at the Olympics and win a medal and launch my career from there. I'm known around here, I'm young and I chill out with a lot of other youngsters, and when they find out that Amir Khan has a gym, they want to come to it and train. The doors are open to anyone, boys and girls. We didn't have that when we were kids and I want to give something back to the community I grew up in. I've put about £800,000 (approximately $1.6-million) of my own money into the gym and all of the facilities. That's a lot of money, but it's an investment in the community. The kids pay £1 to come to the gym and they can use bags, pads, a sauna, computers, and they only have to bring a towel. Even the gloves are there for them.

So many kids that I've spoken to have told me—and these are kids whose lives have not always been on the straight and narrow—they've told me that training is better than taking drugs. They get a better buzz from it. I

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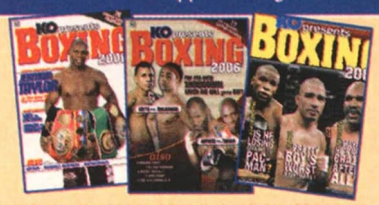

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know people who have had drink and drugs habits, and coming to my boxing gym has taken them off the streets and changed their lives. They use to fight on the streets as well, and now they don't. Boxing has also taught them discipline. They would all be messing around if they hadn't gone to the gym, and it's very rewarding when parents come up to me and say that they know where their kids are in the evening, they know that they're safe and they're enjoying it and looking after themselves, whereas before these parents were scared about what their kids were getting up to.

The Ring: You are a young British Muslim and, from the very start of your career, you have not shied away from this or from the responsibilities that your celebrity status has thrust upon you in relation to important issues in a multicultural country such as Britain.

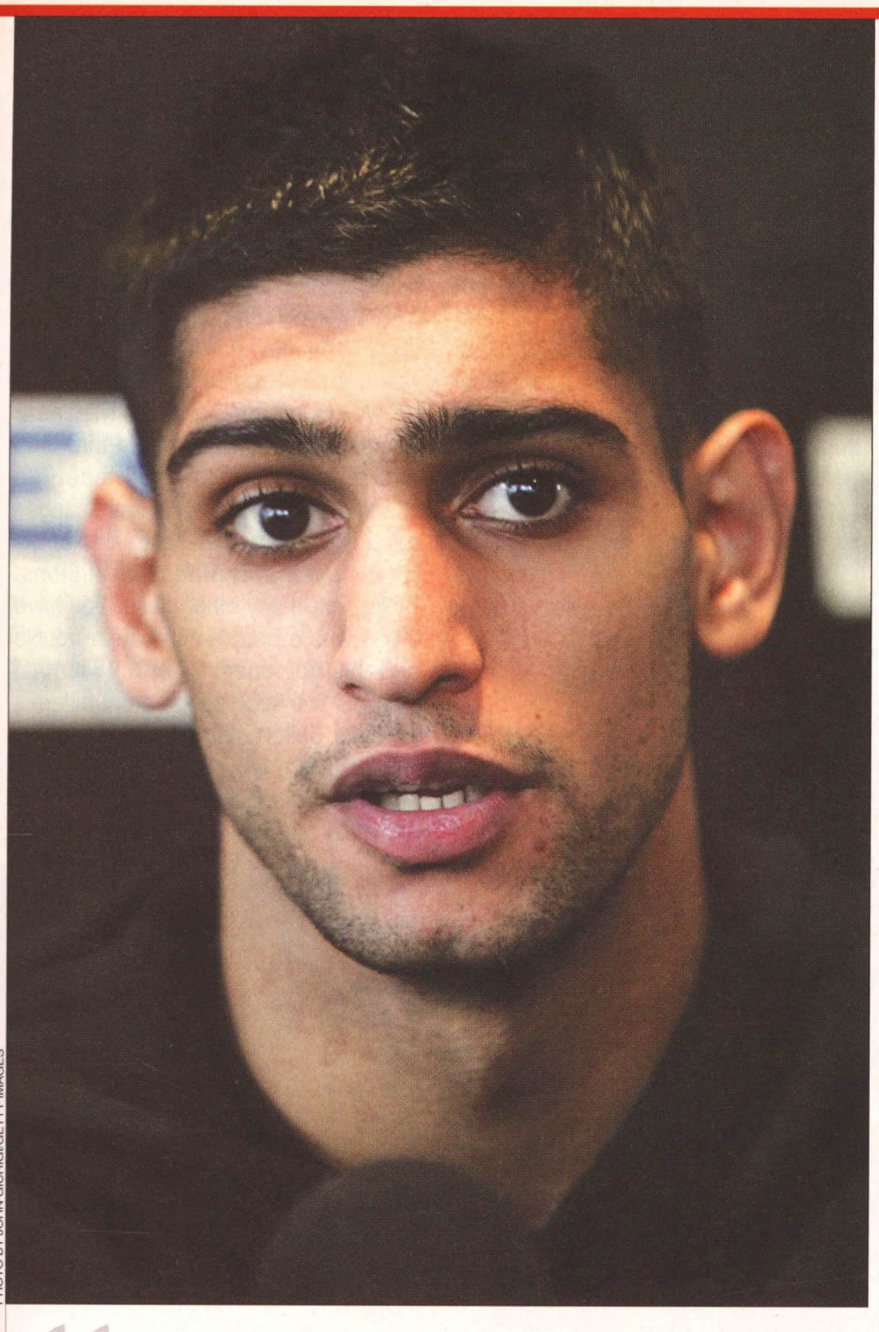
AK: That's right. I'm Muslim, I'm proud to be a British Muslim and I will never forget my religion. I do it all in private, I go to the mosque for Friday prayers and I pray.

The Ring: And you've also had to be a spokesman in a way, despite you're youth, and sometimes this has not been easy. Your first fight took place just a week after the July 7 bombings in London in 2005 and, even though you were only 18 years old, you found yourself having to make significant comments, which must have put even more pressure on you at the time.

AK: There have been times when I had to speak out and I've had a lot of pressures on me and it's been hard.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Khan poses with St. Clair and promoter Frank Warren, who has guided his professional career from the start. Warren has recently signed a contact with Planet Hollywood and hopes to bring Khan to the Unites States to fight in the near future.



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"I don't just look after Muslim people or Asian people. People say to me that I'm kind of like an icon for all types of people here in Britain, black, white, mixed, everyone. I can feel people's love and I'm grateful for it."

People have said to me, "You're a Muslim, you're Asian, look what's happening with terrorism," and I was like a spokesperson for young British Muslim people, and I was 17, 18 years old. I was a kid, but by saying a few words, I was able to have a positive effect, I hope, in terms of people's outlook.

The Ring: You seem to feel a strong obligation to represent the

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community in which you grew up with real class and dignity.

AK: I have my family around me and we've always been very close. The circle is tight. I was taught to be respectful of other people and that's why I am this way. I still get told off by my mum and dad, I really do. If I was to come home late or if there was a mess in my bedroom or if I was to get into a fight with my younger brother, they wouldn't think twice about telling me off. My family doesn't look at me any different just because I've had some success in boxing, and I think this has helped me to keep my feet on the ground.

I don't want people to hate me and think that I'm an idiot or I'm arrogant and I let it all get to my head. I've grown up, just like everyone else around here. I can go anywhere on my own. No one ever says anything bad to me. Some people might see me as a celebrity and a lot of celebrities can't go out on their own because they think that people will cause them problems, but people love me, they genuinely do. I treat people with respect and I'm just myself because this is the way that I was brought up. I have always shown respect to my elders. Like that woman today and her son, I don't really know them, though I think the young lad knows me from school days. They were just shopping and had loads of bags. They had a long walk and I saw them struggling, so I said that I'd drop them home. If my mum was in that position, I'd like someone to help her too.

The Ring: And local community people have emphasized the positive impact that you and your family have made here. I recall the mayor of Bolton stating in a speech that you and your family had done more for inter-community relations than anyone in the past 30 years.

AK: That's right and some of the people have come up to me and said, "You're doing a great job and you're doing this and you're doing that," but the truth is that I'm just being me. I'm not doing it to make myself look good, I'm doing it for the people ... *(Khan shouts out to a boy carrying a kit bag over his shoulder)* ... That's a kid there who trains in the gym as well. He's heading there now. He never went to a gym before and he said that he's come into this country in the hardest possible way. He said that several times his life he was in danger and he was near death, but now he believes that God has brought him to this place. It's changed his life. The gym has changed a lot of people's lives here, kids of different ages and different religions. Bolton is like any other place. You have areas where people can cause trouble and this guy doesn't get on with that guy. But I've seen people from different areas of Bolton, and they didn't get on for years, but they come to the boxing club, they work together on the pads and hold the bags for each other, and

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Khan has given back to his community by investing almost $2-million in a community center in his hometown of Bolton. There are currently between 300 and 400 children attending the center. The mayor of Bolton said that Khan and his family had done more for inter-community relations than anybody in the past 30 years.

now they're mates. There will never be a fight among those people.

You know, I don't just look after Muslim people or Asian people. People say to me that I'm kind of like an icon for all types of people here in Britain, black, white, mixed, everyone. I can feel people's love and I'm grateful for it. I know that God is with me and the amount of people who love me far outnumbers the small amount of people who may not like me for who I am and what I stand for. I believe I'm on the right path. I don't do anything stupid. I'm still young and there are pressures on me, but I'm happy with the way that my life is going.

The Ring: In terms of being young and the kind of traps that young people can fall into, unfortunately you were involved in a car accident in which a man got knocked down. He recovered, thankfully, but he died recently from complications that were unrelated to the accident, and you have also been caught speeding by police. Have you learnt lessons from these incidents?

AK: These were lessons to be learnt, of course. It was me being young and stupid and having a new car, driving it around. I've learnt my lesson. It's part of life; you make mistakes. For six months I was banned from driving, and I appreciate driving more than I did before, so I don't speed. I'm chilled out now. It's very sad what happened to that guy. I was stupid, I made a mistake and it led to something like that and it's made me careful not to repeat that mistake again. I'm wiser now.

The Ring: Do you look up to guys like Joe Calzaghe, Ricky Hatton, and David Haye? Seeing what they have achieved, does this motivate you and encourage you to think that you can achieve similar success in your career?

AK: People like Joe and Ricky, that's the level I want to hit in the near future. I want to become world champion, I want to go to America and box there, and I want to hold on to the world title for years. Look at how many years Calzaghe has been at the very top, more than a decade. He's an inspiration. I want to do the same, and when my chance comes, I'm going to take it with both hands. ■

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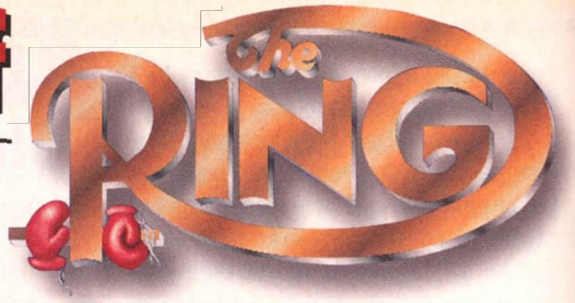

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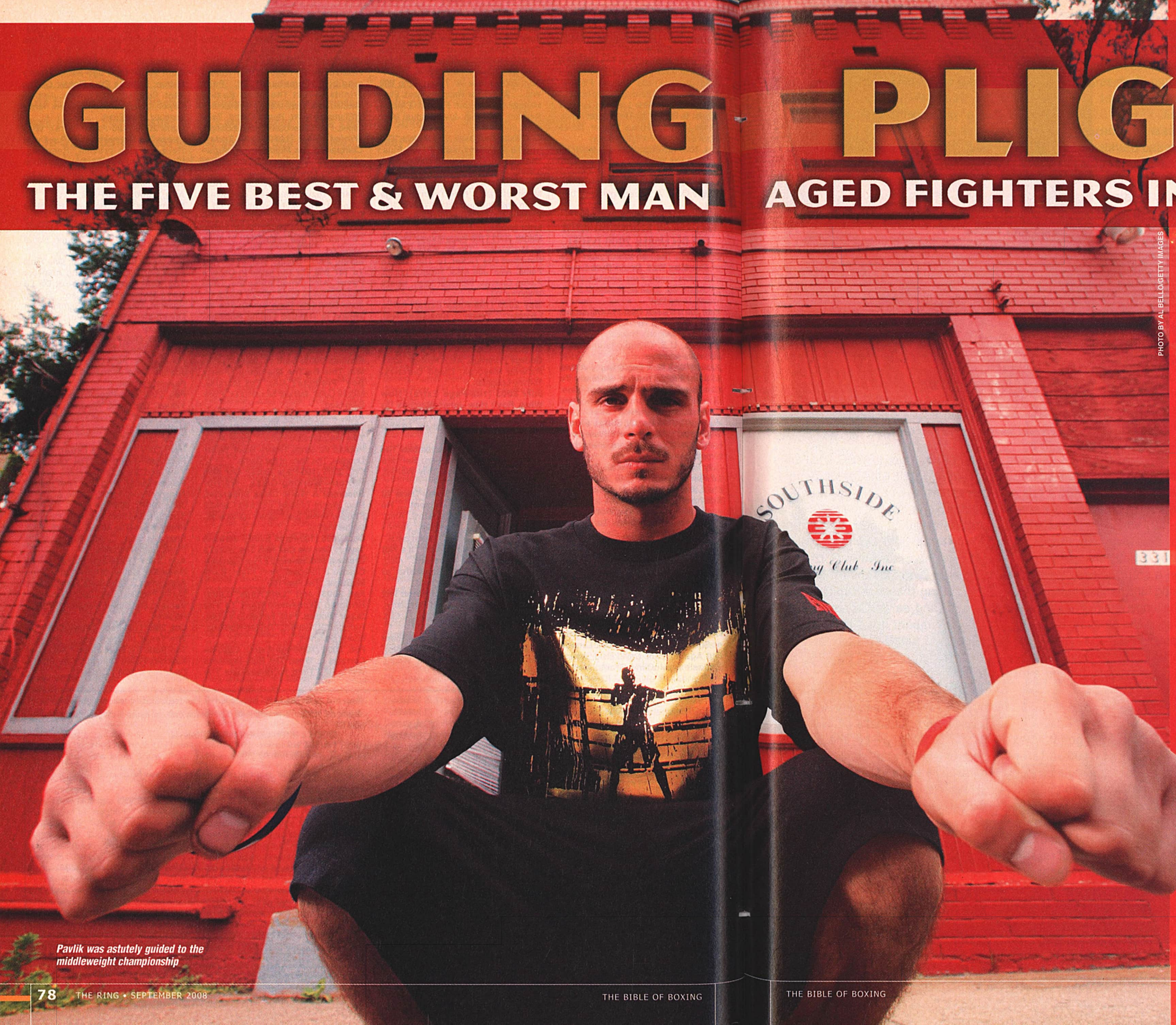


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Pavlik was astutely guided to the middleweight championship

By Eric Raskin

In any team sport, an athlete's competition schedule is pre-determined and entirely outside his control. Even in most individual sports, the schedule of events is known well in advance and the only decisions for the player involve which contests he'll participate in and which he'll skip.

But boxing is different. A fighter has the privilege of choosing when, where, and, most importantly, against whom each bout will take place. If you want to avoid dangerous opposition, you can. If you want to fight once a year, you can. If you refuse to play any "road games," that's up to you. Even the length of your bouts is an option you can sometimes control, as evidenced by the fact that 88-fight veteran Butterbean has had 86 four-rounders.

But being able to manipulate all of these factors isn't just a privilege; it's also a challenge and sometimes even a burden. Play it too safe for too long, and you'll hear it from the critics. Take a risk that doesn't pan out, and you'll also hear it from the critics. Turn down a dream opportunity without realizing you may never get such a good offer again (cough, cough, Sergio Mora), and you'll hear it from the critics.

But as we all know, boxing fans can have short memories, and a fighter like Joe Calzaghe can waste away nearly a decade of his career, then take a few intelligently

calculated gambles and be forgiven for his earlier missteps. In other words, it's never too late for a fighter making questionable managerial decisions and/or listening to bad advice to alter his course.

With that in mind, this feature focuses in on five fighters for whom we have no shortage of advice, and five for whom we wouldn't suggest changing a thing. It should be noted that career management in boxing is an art, not an exact science. But that's never stopped us from acting like we have all the answers.

FIVE MAKING ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

KELLY PAVLIK

Bob Arum's Top Rank promotional company has received credit for many years now for knowing how to develop fighters as well as anyone in the boxing business. From Floyd Mayweather to Michael Carbajal to Erik Morales to the crown jewel of his portfolio, Oscar De La Hoya, Arum has proven more than capable of maximizing earnings by moving a young talent at just the right speed.

Among Top Rank's recent projects, Pavlik stands out as a fighter whose gradual transition from prospect to superstar couldn't have been engineered any better. When he turned pro as a lanky, 18-year-old, blond-haired (not for long), white kid from Ohio, Pavlik faced the usual challenges in adapting his game from the amateurs to the pros, but he also faced an uphill climb in making observers take him seriously. If matchmaker Bruce Trampler got him knocked off early, he'd be written off as another midwestern kid who couldn't fight. If he got to a title shot without doing something to earn it, he'd face the "great white hype" labels. But Pavlik kept winning, kept stepping up the opposition ever so slowly, scored a couple of breakout knockouts on HBO over Jose Luis Zertuche and Edison Miranda, and was virtually even money when his championship match against Jermain Taylor came. And we all know how that turned out.

As this magazine went press, Pavlik was preparing for a non-threatening mandatory against Gary Lockett, with talk of another unappealing mandatory in the fall. Typically, two mismatches in a row in title defenses opens you up to criticism, as it hints that you might be on the Zsolt Erdei/Chris John path *(see below)*. But in Pavlik's case, it's justifiable. By taking on Zertuche, then Miranda, then Taylor twice, he's had four toss-up fights in a row and has earned a gimme. And there's talk of a showdown with Arthur Abraham in early-'09, which is an excellent matchup, but, given Abraham's low profile, not exactly a superfight. By taking on a softie or two, Pavlik will have boxing fans hungering to see him face a challenge again, making a fight with someone like Abraham even more eagerly anticipated.

When it comes to Pavlik, there's an intelligent strategy behind every move.

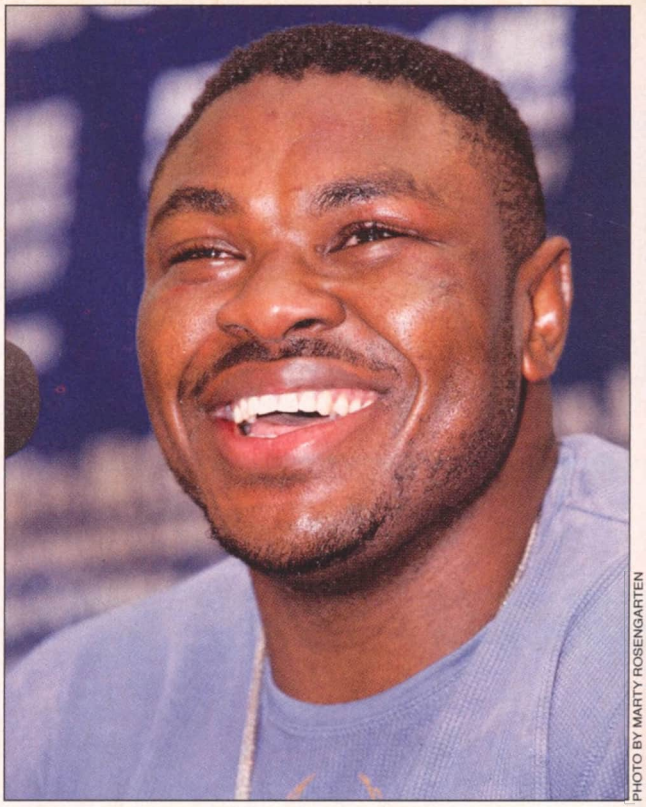


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Peter has reaped the rewards of a hard-line stance

SAMUEL PETER

Ask 100 different negotiation experts and you'll get 100 different answers about whether stubbornness is a good or bad quality to possess. Certainly, quite a few fighters have screwed up their careers by being excessively stubborn. But some have also flourished as a result of refusing to budge. And top heavyweight contender Peter is one who is reaping the rewards of taking a hard-line stance.

After he beat James Toney, not once, but twice, to become the mandatory challenger to WBC titlist Oleg Maskaev, Vitali Klitschko's people, desperately wanting to face the vulnerable Maskaev, made financial offers few fighters could have refused in an effort to get Peter to step aside. But Peter, manager Ivaylo Gotzev, and promoter Dino Duva were insistent that getting the opportunity he had earned (and earned again) against Maskaev meant more to them than a briefcase full of C-notes, and they held their ground until the WBC and Klitschko gave up. It took a mountain of patience—Peter had to wait 14 months after his second win over Toney before he finally got the aging Kazakh in the ring—but the patience paid off when Peter knocked him out in the sixth round in March '08.

Now Peter is positioned to make good money against Vitali, and if he wins, he'll be positioned to make even better money against baby brother Wladimir Klitschko. Had he taken the step-aside money, Vitali might have beaten Maskaev and there was no guarantee that he would ever give Peter a shot at the alphabet belt. "The Nigerian Nightmare" would potentially have been stuck in limbo fighting more

fringe contenders like Jameel McCline (where disaster can strike with one punch, as Peter nearly found out) instead of establishing himself as a vital component of THE RING title picture.

This story isn't done being told; what happens against one or both Klitschkos will ultimately determine whether Peter's stubbornness was of minor benefit or major benefit to his career. But to this point, it's worked out well. Peter has proven over the last few years that he's willing to fight anyone. But he's also proven that he won't let anyone stand in the way of the fights he wants most.

MIGUEL COTTO

Miguel Cotto hasn't particularly gone out of his way to call out Floyd Mayweather, the way much of the boxing world would like him to, and his reason is pretty simple: He's willing to fight anyone, at any time, and it's implied therefore that he's in a perpetual state of calling out everybody. He doesn't need to say Mayweather's name to make it known that he'd like to make the fight; Cotto's actions speak for him, and the resume he's built in just under seven years as a pro speaks rather loudly.

When it comes to managing your career well, how you can possibly do any better than remaining undefeated while taking on a steady stream of

PHOTO BY JEFF ZELVANSKY/GETTY IMAGES

Cotto made his team's job easy by beating the best

dangerous opposition? Cotto didn't feast entirely on stiffs in the early stages of his development, and since late-'03, when he stepped up against then-undefeated Carlos Maussa, he's seen one credible foe after another standing in the opposite corner. In his last six fights, he handed future titleholder Paulie Malignaggi his first loss, then did the same to another future titlist in Carlos Quintana, dominated veteran Oktay Urkal, knocked out Zab Judah in his most significant test to date, raised the degree of difficulty again and outpointed Shane Mosley, and then wiped out *The Contender* star Alfonso Gomez. In terms of taking on name opposition that also happens, for the most part, to be championship-caliber opposition, you can't do it much better than that.

Oh, and he's facing Antonio Margarito next.

Maybe Cotto will become every bit as beloved among Puerto Rican fans as Felix Trinidad, and maybe he won't—the fact that he's the proverbial strong and silent type, rather than being as outwardly emotional as Trinidad, may hold him back. But his popularity will never be compromised by the perception that he's ducking anybody. When you have a fighter with Cotto's abilities, the right thing to do is match him tough, and that's precisely what Cotto's people have done—with no objection whatsoever from the fighter.

MANNY PACQUIAO

When a fighter from the Philippines who turned pro at 106 pounds finds himself as one of the top five most bankable stars in the American boxing market, you know he's doing something right. Pacquiao's popularity and wealth are a testament to the power of taking on as many elite fighters as you possibly can.

Not even 30 years old yet, Pacquiao has won alphabet titles in four divisions and RING championships in two and has fought seven times against the Mexican trio of Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, and Juan Manuel Marquez. Pacquiao's record against those likely Hall of Famers is an exceptional 5-1-1 (3). It's an amazing amount of business to have gotten done in your teens and 20s.

The game plan with Pacquiao, since he first became a noteworthy commodity in America by crushing Lehlo Ledwaba on an Oscar De La Hoya undercard in 2001, has been to take on the best possible opposition in the States while satisfying the massive throngs back in the Philippines by putting together frequent homecoming bouts (four of them in the last six years). It's a smart approach, balancing two fan bases and allowing both to grow (not that his profile in the Philippines could possibly get any bigger).

PHOTO BY NATASHA CHOMESKY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Nobody has faced more top names than Pacquiao

What could you possibly have done better with Pac-Man? Aside from convincing Naseem Hamed to un-retire, not a whole lot. Amazingly, this 130-pound fighter, who's about to rise to 135 to claim a title in a fifth division, is being taken seriously as a candidate to face De La Hoya in "The Golden Boy's" farewell fight. If Pacquiao's people can find a way to make that fight happen, presumably earning him an eight-figure payday, then his career has to go into the books as one of the most brilliantly handled in boxing history.

Not everything related to Pacquiao's management has been smooth; the Murad Muhammad era ended with legal suits being filed, and when Pacquiao escaped Muhammad's clutches, there was an ugly transition where he made separate promises to both Golden Boy and Top Rank. But that behind-the-scenes stuff doesn't matter to boxing fans. What matters is whom you fight and what happens in the ring. And in that regard, Pacquiao has done no wrong.

ISRAEL VAZQUEZ

You have to give manager Frank Espinoza a lot of credit. Early in Vazquez' career, some observers on the West Coast fight scene wrote off "El Magnifico" as nothing more than a clubfighter (not that you could blame them after his split decision loss in '99 to ordinary Marcos Licona), and Espinoza stuck with the kid and kept steering him toward real opportunities rather than matching him like a trialhorse-in-the-making.

Vazquez fought good fighters but not great fighters as he won 12 straight after the Licona loss, earning a high-profile opportunity against Oscar Larios on ESPN2 in May '02. When Vazquez lost that one in a thriller, to most observers his ceiling had been established. But Espinoza stuck with him again, guided him to an alphabet title shot, and eventually got him another fight with Larios for the vacant RING championship at 122 pounds. Once Vazquez dominated that fight and won via stoppage in the third round, suddenly the boxing world

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Manager Frank Espinoza (far right) never lost faith in "El Magnifico"

saw in Vazquez what Espinoza saw in him all along.

Not even Espinoza, however, could have predicted how extraordinary Vazquez' title trilogy with Rafael Marquez would be or how much it would do for his fighter's popularity. Suddenly, Vazquez has gone from a game, respectable little fighter to a likely Hall of Famer. And it wouldn't have been possible without proper managerial steering (especially since Vazquez has never had one of the more powerful promoters behind him).

After each of Vazquez' four losses, he's come back stronger, which is a sign of a fighter with a huge heart, but it's also a sign that the people behind him know how to walk that thin line in between babying him and leading him to slaughter. Compared to fighters like Peter, Pavlik, Cotto, and Pacquiao, Vazquez has gotten to the top the hard way. Without the belief and support of Espinoza, it's highly unlikely that Vazquez would have gotten there at all.

FIVE MAKING ALL THE WRONG MOVES

ZSOLT ERDEI

We see mediocre fighters protected in Europe all the time—remember Brian Nielsen trying to reach 49-0? The irritating thing about the way Germany-based Hungarian light heavyweight Erdei is being protected is that he's actually a pretty good boxer. He has a tremendous amateur pedigree, having competed in both the 1996 and 2000 Olympics (winning a bronze the second time around), and as a pro, he's proven his worth with a lopsided victory over Julio Gonzalez to claim a belt in '04, a couple of close wins over tough Hugo Garay in '04 and '05, and a kayo of former titlist Mehdi Sahnoune in '05.

Since the start of '07, however, his handlers at Universum-Box have been treating him like the boy in the bubble. His last four fights have seen three American clubfighters, Danny Santiago, George Blades, and DeAndrey Abron, flown in to pad his record. You know it's bad when even we American writers have never heard of some of these guys. Erdei's best-known opponent in his last four was Tito Mendoza, whom nobody is mistaking for a 175-pound contender.

PHOTO BY BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Why is promoter Klaus-Peter Kohl being so careful with Erdei?

Everyone else who matters in the light heavyweight division took real fights to open '08: Bernard Hopkins vs. Joe Calzaghe, Chad Dawson vs. Glen Johnson, Antonio Tarver vs. Clinton Woods. And the best Erdei's people could do was get him Abron, a no-name from Ohio who was still fighting six-rounders a year ago.

Erdei is 33 years old; it's not too late to start trying to book him fights that mean something. It's not too late for him to find out how good he really is, to challenge himself, to show the world he's more than just a protected paper champion. Maybe Erdei will be content to retire in a few years, undefeated but unknown outside of Germany and Hungary, with a legacy as little more than a poor man's Sven Ottke. But more likely, Erdei will be left with regrets and questions about what could have been. Let's hope those regrets and questions creep in now and inspire him to change his path before it's too late.

MIKKEL KESSLER

Unlike Erdei, whose career has been heading in the wrong direction for a couple of years now, Kessler's mismanagement is a new development. He was steered toward the top of the super middleweight division expertly, took a chance in what appeared to be a 50/50 fight for 168-pound supremacy against Joe Calzaghe, and kept it a 50/50 fight for about seven or eight rounds before Calzaghe pulled away to capture a unanimous decision. As of the final bell of that entertaining bout last November, Kessler, despite losing his undefeated record, was one of the hotter fighters in the sport. He lost with class and dignity to one of the top pound-for-pound fighters, and fans in both Europe and America eagerly awaited his next move.

More than six months later, the awaiting continues. The once red-hot "Viking Warrior" is in danger of becoming as cold as a Nordic winter—particularly because he and his people backed out of the perfect comeback fight and managed to piss off half of the boxing industry in the process. A bout with Edison Miranda was all but a done deal for Showtime in May, but after the Miranda camp agreed to all of Team Kessler's unusually particular demands, the Dane went ahead and balked anyway. This action immediately burned bridges with Showtime, Miranda promoter Leon Margules, and deal-brokering promoter Lou DiBella, who all put extensive effort into the contract.

Miranda was just the kind of high profile, relatively one-dimensional fighter that boxer-punchers of Kessler's quality dream of taking on. Is the hard-punching Miranda dangerous? Of course. But Kessler would have been a solid favorite to win, and maybe even to do so impressively enough to create interest in a rematch with Calzaghe. Instead, Miranda has signed for a meaningful fight against Arthur Abraham, while Kessler sits on the sidelines, trying to come up with a good explanation for why he struck out while the iron was hot.

WINKY WRIGHT

When you've accomplished all that Wright has in what almost assuredly has been a Hall of Fame career, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking you hold all of the cards. Unfortunately, marketability and popularity trump accomplishment in this game, especially when a fighter is coming off a loss, and Wright's overvaluing of himself has led to serious mismanagement at an age (36) where he can't afford to make too many more wrong decisions.

The Winkster took a perfectly reasonable gamble and jumped two weight

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Kessler has failed to capitalize on his strong showing against Calzaghe

classes to fight Bernard Hopkins in July '07, only to lose a close decision in a predictably dreadful fight. Nearly a full year later, Wright still has no fights scheduled, and has professed that he's only interested in huge names like Oscar De La Hoya (keep dreaming, Winky). When asked about top European fighters like Kessler and Abraham, either of whom would make an HBO-worthy opponent for Wright, the 56-fight veteran declared, "Why should I fight lesser guys when I know I'm above them?" Simple answer: Because knowing you're above them doesn't pay you any money and doesn't keep you in the public eye.

Wright has become a punchline among boxing fans for the way he's managed himself out of the headlines and onto the sides of milk cartons. One thing an aging southpaw without a knockout win in more than six years can't afford to do is let people forget about him. Wright needed to come right back after the Hopkins loss with a win to remind people he still matters. (Actually, he needed to come right back after his controversial draw against Jermain Taylor and accept $5-million for the rematch, but that's a whole other discussion.) Bottom line: Wright needs to fight. Even if that means accepting a "lesser guy" as an opponent.

JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ JR.

The phrase "all the wrong moves" is actually quite unfair to Chavez. For the first four years of his pro career, he was moved quite brilliantly. He was allowed to learn the game and develop against the right opposition after turning pro at age 17 with hardly any amateur experience. Some have criticized Top Rank for moving him up in class too slowly, but the truth is, he's gotten pushed just the right amount by many of his opponents, and if he'd been moved any faster, he wouldn't be undefeated anymore. And as with his daddy, a long unbeaten streak will be critical for the marketability of "J.C. Superspawn."

The problem isn't with the opposition; it's with Top Rank's 2008 television plan. After a December '07 pay-per-view experiment exceeded financial expectations, the opportunity to fight in front of a massive audience on HBO against Alfonso Gomez (a difficult but winnable fight for Junior) was brushed aside in favor of more small-scale pay-per-views (six times in '08 if he stays healthy). In the short-term, this is good for cash flow. But with a 22-year-old prospect, the focus should be on the long-term, on getting Chavez seen by as large an audience as possible, and PPV runs counter to that purpose. Veteran Jose Celaya and unbeaten but unknown Tobia Loriga are fine as far as matchmaking goes, but limiting the audience to 50,000-70,000 households seems unwise, particularly when those households consist purely of people who are already devoted Chavez fans. The mainstream isn't even getting a whiff of the kid when he fights on these off-off-Broadway shows.

Chavez Jr. should be fighting on ESPN2 or Telefutura at least once this year. He should be fighting on *ShoBox* or *Boxing After Dark* if possible. If he's going to fight on pay-per-view, it should be on the undercard of a major show

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Where has Winky been since losing to Hopkins?

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Chavez Jr. isn't getting the exposure he needs on small PPV cards

that will draw a few hundred-thousand buys, like Miguel Cotto vs. Antonio Margarito. Let Junior headline pay-per-views when he's ready to headline *major* pay-per-views. Until then, he needs exposure more than anything else.

CHRIS JOHN

Ladies and gentlemen, the Zsolt Erdei School of Title Protection is proud to present its newest graduate, Chris John! Since scoring his career-defining win against Juan Manuel Marquez in March '06, John has fought four times, but none of those bouts have come against a legitimate top-20 contender at 126 pounds. Panama's Renan Acosta and Roinet Caballero and Japan's Zaiki Takemoto were complete unknowns when they stepped into the ring with John, and Venezuela's Jose "Cheo" Rojas was a faded 35-year-old who hadn't scored a quality win in four years. None of these four challengers owned more than 24 wins, and none had less than four losses.

What has the incredibly soft matching of "The Dragon" accomplished? Well, it's kept him undefeated. Beyond that, no progress has been made. In fact, this overprotection of a gifted fighter has cost him his number-one featherweight rating in THE RING, on account of Robert Guerrero taking on better opposition and winning impressively. It's quite possible, however, that John doesn't care about his RING ranking. But he should care about what the ranking change signifies: that the public's opinion of him is heading in the wrong direction because he's holed up in Indonesia fighting one setup after another.

There's been talk from the John camp of him wanting to come to America, but frankly, nobody over here cares much because he's failed to create a buzz about himself. A fight with Guerrero for THE RING title would matter to hardcore fans, but HBO and Showtime would hardly get into a bidding war over it. Same goes for matches against Steven Luevano or Jorge Linares. The only fight that might mean something in North America would be a rematch with Marquez, but Marquez has done so much to advance his standing since losing to John that it's hard to see him settling for a bout like that at this stage.

John is only 28 years old. He has plenty of time to get back on track and start fighting featherweights whom fans have heard of. Or he can continue to perform his one-man show for an audience that doesn't extend beyond Indonesia. At a certain point, the big-fish-in-a-small-pond angle gets old. And we reached that point a couple of fights ago. ■

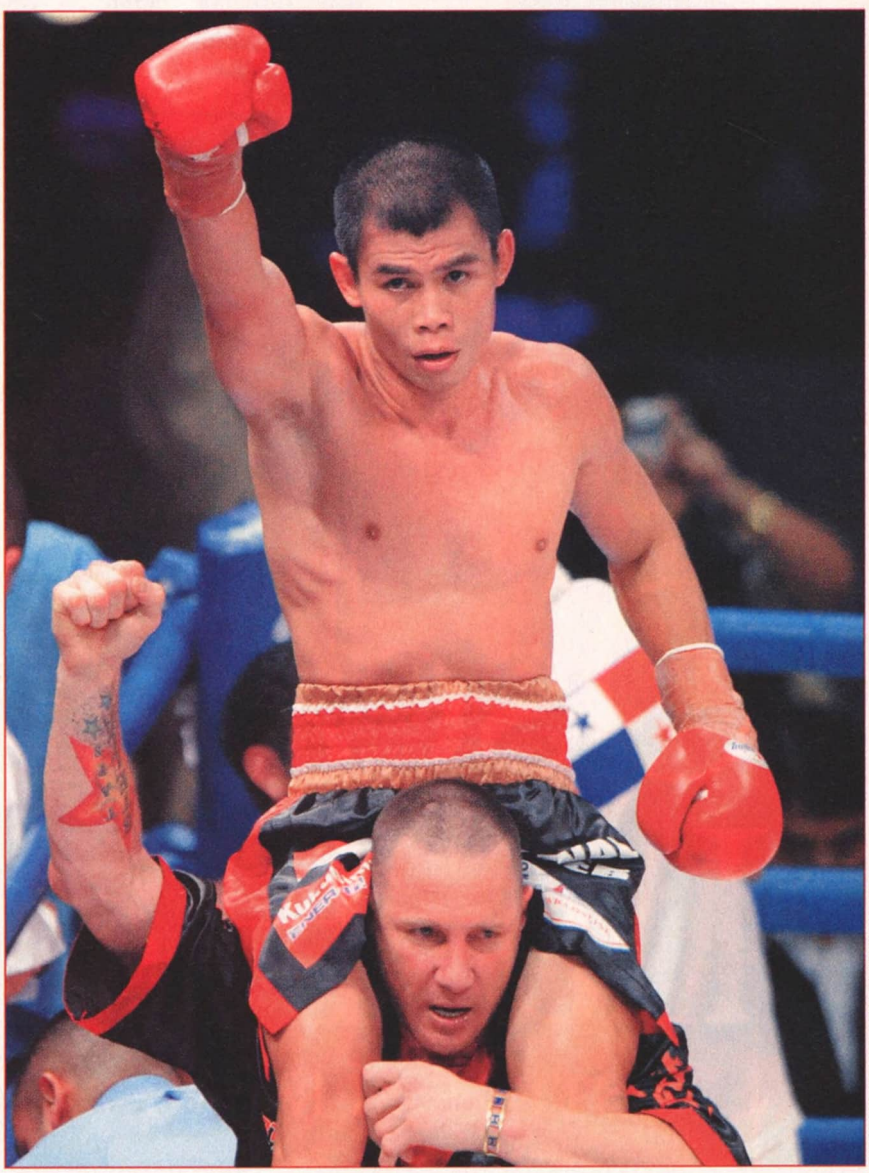
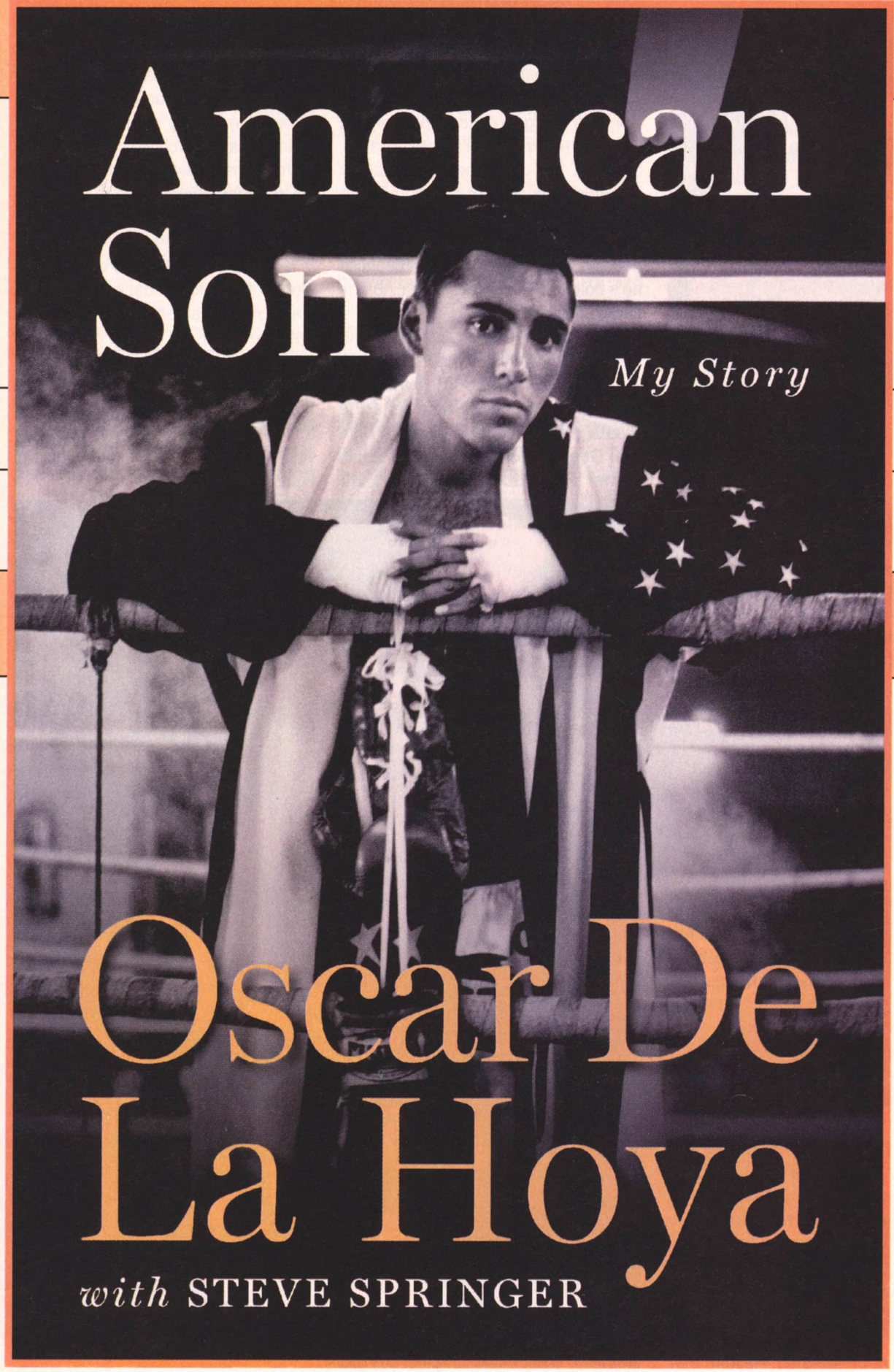


PHOTO BY ADEK BERRY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

John needs to stop defending against clubfighters


American Son
My Story
Oscar De La Hoya
with STEVE SPRINGER

Exclusive Book Excerpt

AMERICAN SON My Story

By Oscar De La Hoya
With Steve Springer

Chavez: The Myth And The Man

The first time I saw Julio Cesar Chavez in action, I was in awe. Just a kid, I gained access to the inner sanctum of a bar thanks to my father, who snuck me in. That alone left me in awe.

The occasion was a closed-circuit telecast of a Chavez fight. There he was, on the screen, the man whose name was spoken in hushed tones in our house and the homes of so many of my uncles and aunts. Mexico's greatest fighter, Chavez was a throwback to the days when the number of matches a fighter had might reach three digits and the number of years he was in the ring might exceed two decades. Chavez qualified on both counts. He fought for 23 years and finished with 107 wins and two draws in his 115 fights, including an astounding 86 knockouts.

Chavez looked untouchable to me up there on the screen that day, like he wasn't a real person. It was as if you could only see him on TV, a mythical hero rather than flesh and blood.

He became flesh and blood for me one incredible night when I was 17. Training at the Resurrection Gym, I hadn't even noticed the stranger wander in until I heard my name.

"Oscar De La Hoya," he yelled out. "I'm

looking for an Oscar De La Hoya."

He was also looking for Shane Mosley and Pepe Reilly.

We couldn't believe it when we heard that this guy worked for Chavez. What could he possibly want with us?

Scheduled to fight Meldrick Taylor in Las Vegas, Chavez, who was in L.A., was looking for sparring partners. He wanted a few promising young amateurs who had speed and could throw a lot of punches. His people were given our names.

Our attitude was, "Hell yeah, let's do it."

With my trainer, Robert Alcazar, I went to an address that turned out to be a restaurant where a ring had been installed upstairs. The place was crowded and noisy with mariachis roaming the downstairs restaurant area.

"The Lion Of Culiacan" in his prime: Like virtually all Mexican and Mexican-Americans, Chavez was De La Hoya's boyhood hero.

Pepe, Shane, and I waited in a back room to be summoned. You might think a teenager would be intimidated about getting into the ring with a legend, but I was excited.

Pepe was called up first. When he came back down, Shane and I bubbled over with questions. What was it like? How did he treat you? What did his punches feel like?

All Pepe said was that it was fun.

Shane went next, and finally, my turn came.

Pepe and Shane had both worn 12-ounce gloves. As I prepared to go up, one of Chavez' assistant trainers stopped me. "Nope," he said, "hold on. First, you have to put these on."

They were 18-ounce gloves, so big they were like pillows, so much padding they could do no harm.

"We heard stuff about you," the trainer told me.

I put the gloves on, went upstairs, got in the ring, and when the bell rang, I didn't hold back. I threw hard punches, fast combinations, and was landing many of them. It was getting serious, at least from my point of view.

I could hear a murmur from the people in the room. I had wanted to make an impression, and apparently, I was doing so.

I had certainly gotten Chavez' attention. All of a sudden he loaded up on a right hand, connected, and I went down to one knee.

I bounced right up, ready for more. After sparring for two rounds, we were told that was it.

As Robert and I started to leave, the assistant trainer came over and told me, "Julio wants you to come to this address tonight. He wants to talk to you. You alone, not the other two sparring partners."

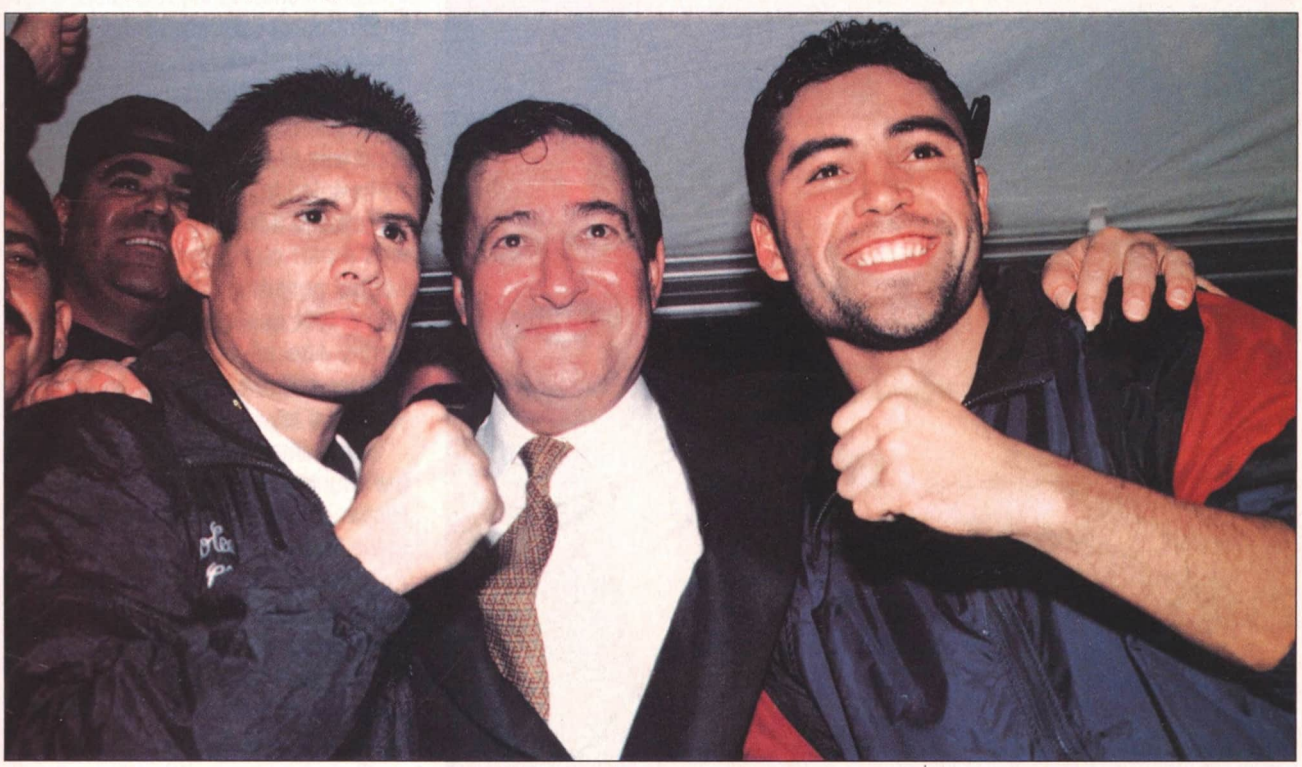
That was awesome. Julio Cesar Chavez wanted to see me. Only me.

Still, I didn't tell a lot of people what had happened, because I was embarrassed he had dropped me. I know it was Julio Cesar Chavez, but it was still embarrassing.

Robert and I went to the address, I formally met Chavez, we shook hands,

PHOTO BY MIKE FIALA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

De La Hoya first met Chavez (pictured sparring in 2000) when the Mexican icon invited him to spar with him six years before they fought. Oscar did a bit too well in the gym workout, prompting Chavez to deck him.



Chavez and De La Hoya pose with promoter Bob Arum during the buildup to their first fight. They all took part in a 12-day, 23-city publicity tour during which De La Hoya discovered that Chavez was a lot different person than he'd thought.

"I wanted to fight [Julio Cesar Chavez] because it was my job and, I felt, my destiny. But there was a part of me that wondered how I could possibly fight my hero, a part of me that questioned whether I was worthy. After all, this was a fighter every Mexican national and Mexican-American looked up to."

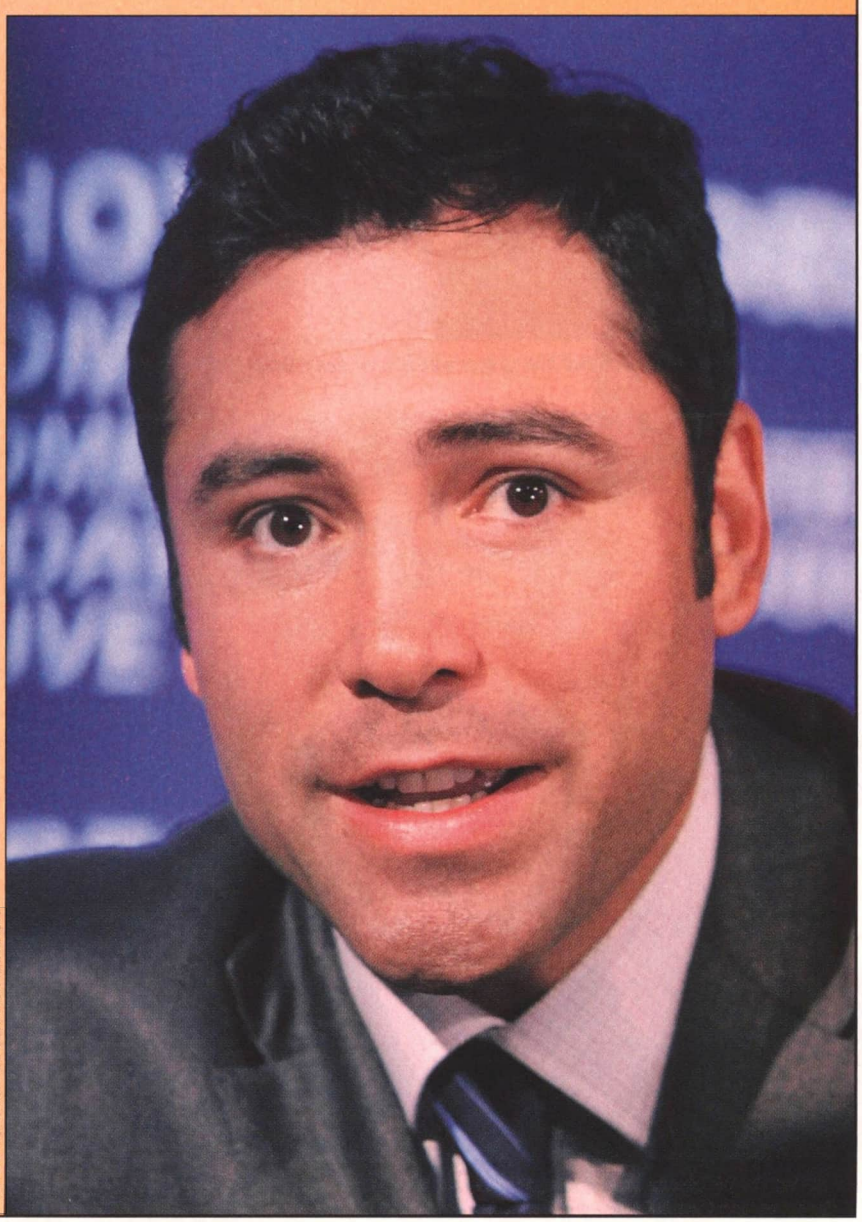


PHOTO BY GEORGE NAPOLITANO/FILM MAGIC

and he said, "You hit me with some good punches. You're a great fighter."

To hear that from him . . . whoa, that was a real confidence booster.

Yet, six years later, when we were ready to face each other for real, I still had trouble picturing myself in the ring with this larger-than-life figure. When we posed for pictures, face-to-face, after our double tuneup at Caesars Palace in February of 1996, it was almost like I was merely getting the opportunity to take a picture with my hero, a photo I could show my friends.

It was a scary photo. Julio's face looked like a battleground, the front line for his fights.

And those were just the documented battles in the ring. A heavy drinker and pursuer of the good life, Chavez, a brawler at war with the world, enjoyed folk-hero status among his countrymen. They loved the warrior image. They reveled in his macho style. This wasn't a man who expended a lot of energy studying opponents or discussing strategy. He would simply come forward at the opening bell, absorb the best shots his opponents could deliver, and then proceed to dismantle that opponent's body and will, landing his trademark shots to the ribs and kidneys, shots that could cause legs to shake and resolve to wilt.

For many Mexican and Mexican-American fight fans, this was what the sport was all about.

I wanted to fight him because it was my job and, I felt, my destiny. But there was a part of me that wondered how I could possibly fight my hero, a part of me that questioned whether I was worthy. After all, this was a fighter every Mexican national and Mexican-American looked up to.

My doubts were nothing compared to the doubts and derision I received from Hispanic fans in the period leading up to the fight.

"Chavez is the real champion," they would tell me. "He looks like a fighter. Look at you. You've never been cut up. Look at your nose. It doesn't have any bumps in it. Look at your smile and those perfect teeth. You're the Golden Boy."

They just weren't impressed with my finesse, with my boxing skills, with

my fast hands and quick feet, with my ability to inflict damage while avoiding the inevitable counterpunches. They didn't appreciate the fact that, for me, the sweet science was indeed a science.

They didn't even care about my unbeaten record.

They wanted blood and guts. They wanted a hero who looked as if he had been in a fight. Maybe even lost a few.

They wanted Chavez.

So when we signed to fight, Chavez, while certainly not the choice of the Las Vegas oddsmakers, became the sentimental favorite.

Never mind the fact that, at 33, Chavez was living off his reputation, the hard living and brawling having taken a large measure of vitality out of his body. He looked as if he'd been through almost a hundred previous matches.

I, on the other hand, was 23, had perfected my trade, and was entering my prime, undefeated in 21 professional fights.

It didn't help my image to be stuck with the nickname Chicken De La Hoya. It had been given to me by a New York writer, Michael Katz, because Bob Arum had matched me up early in my career with unranked fighters.

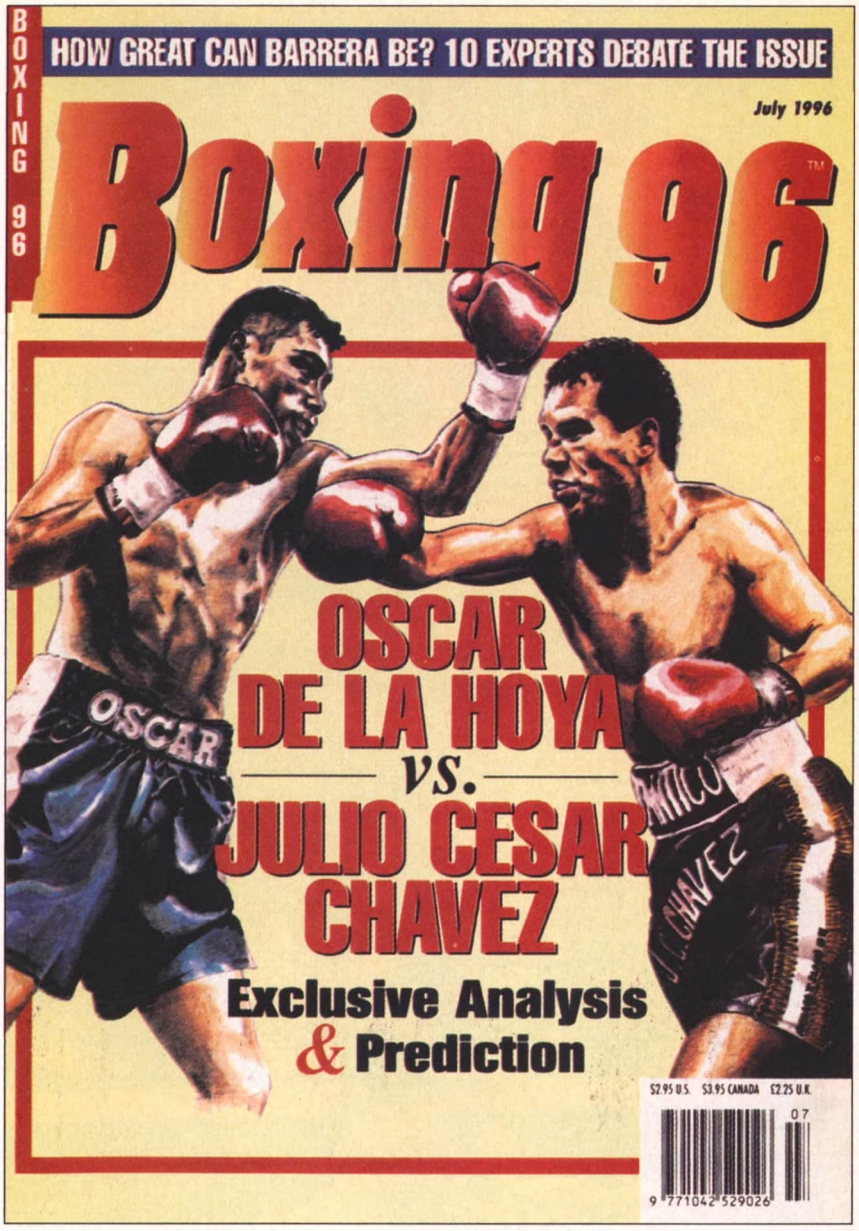
The nickname I was branded with was unfair. Ever hear of Tunney Hunsaker, Herb Siler, Tony Sperti, or Jimmy Robinson? Probably not unless you are a Muhammad Ali trivia fanatic. Those were Ali's first four professional opponents, fighters designed to ease him into the professional ranks.

No matter how much glory or gold amateurs collect before receiving their first check as a prizefighter, no matter how much time they spend in the gym or how many rounds they spar, they need on-the-job training as professionals.

So it had been with Ali. And so it was with me.

By the time I fought Chavez, I was ready, but his fans refused to deal with the harsh reality. They envisioned a memorable upset, the old veteran drawing on reserves from his storied past to hold off boxing's emerging attraction, striking down this New Age upstart who dared to challenge a legend.

In order to hype this crossroads event, a nationwide tour was launched, 23 cities in 12 days.



It began in disappointing fashion for me at the Olympic Auditorium. The fans, the majority of them Mexican-American, booed me and cheered Chavez.

Chavez grinned and said he'd never be booed in his hometown.

I could only grit my teeth, confident that as the fight progressed, the boos would fade along with Chavez.

At one stop on the tour, Chavez faded away completely, disappearing in a limo after a press conference while the rest of us headed for the airport and our private jets, bound for the next city.

We couldn't depart without him, so we waited on the nearly deserted tarmac until, finally, in the distance, we noticed a cloud of dust kicking up and, blasting through it, a limo moving toward us at high speed.

As the car pulled up, Chavez emerged from the backseat, surrounded by local young ladies he had picked up along the way.

Throughout the tour, he would appear in his fur coat surrounded by a band of followers who acted like servants in Emperor Julio's kingdom. He had one guy whose job, it seemed, was to comb his hair, another to tie his shoelaces.

It was disillusioning for me to see who Chavez really was and how he acted.

From a boxing standpoint, however, it was illuminating. What I saw was an emperor ripe to be overthrown. Any doubts about that should have been

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY STEPHEN DUNN/GETTY IMAGES

De La Hoya ripped open a cut over Chavez' left eye in the opening round of their 1996 fight (above), which grew so bad that referee Joe Cortez was forced to stop the fight in the fourth round (left) and award Oscar a TKO victory.

dispelled after a telling scene in San Antonio during the tour.

It was dawn, the first rays of light hitting the placid water along the Riverwalk. I was already up and heading out of my hotel to do roadwork, sweatsuit on, shadowboxing as I made my way out of the lobby and onto the street.

It was then that I came face-to-face with a figure stepping unsteadily out of a limousine.

It was Julio Cesar Chavez returning from a night on the road.

I smiled.

Even in that dim light, I could see the outcome ahead.

PHOTO BY GEORGE NAPOLITANO/FILM MAGIC

"Several months [after the first Chavez fight], I was grand marshal of the annual holiday parade in East L.A. Riding in a car with my father, I was booed. People threw fruit at me and yelled that I hadn't really beaten their champion. Police had to surround my car. My father yelled back, telling my detractors to shut up."

So could a lot of Chavez fans, and they didn't like what they saw. So some of them tried to influence the outcome. Back in Southern California at my Big Bear training site, I began to get threats. Through the mail, on the phone, Chavez supporters would warn me of the consequences of defeating the pride of Mexico.

"You cannot beat our champion," they would say. "And if you do, you will regret it."

Faced with these warnings, more sinister and voluminous in number than any I had previously received, I hired three additional bodyguards. I felt that a threat by Mexican officials to sue me if I tried to wear their flag on my trunks was just another part of a concerted effort to distract me, to make sure I would not be completely focused when I entered the ring.

Why do I say that? Because after that fight, the Mexican government never again disputed my right to display its flag. It was only for that fight. Strange, isn't it?

While Chavez publicly dismissed me as some inconsequential pretender to his throne, I concentrated on studying

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

"Forget the boxing and the moving, the fancy footwork and the quick fists, I told myself as I prepared for the second fight. This time, I was going to stand in front of Chavez, toe-to-toe, and show those Mexican fans I could fight his fight. I could be just as macho as Chavez."

the man behind the myth. I didn't think I could knock him out. He had the head of a bulldog, grounded by the boulder that served as his jaw. But I did think I could outbox him by using the advantages of youth and speed.

I saw an immediate improvement in my skill level under The Professor (legendary trainer Jesus Rivero), but I think he was at his best in preparing me to fight Chavez. My opponent was a man who knew only one style: come forward, be aggressive, and have no fear. He thrived in harm's way. How was I going to slow him down and neutralize his power? The Professor taught me how to do just that.

It was in the training camp preparing for that match when everything clicked. One day, I was throwing my combinations, always moving, staying on my toes, sailing around the ring. I felt like a matador, and my sparring partners, in comparison, seemed like slow, plodding bulls. I was the master of my domain.

That's when everybody in camp accepted Rivero as the real deal. "Look at what he has done for you," everybody would tell me. They didn't have to tell me. I could see. I was a believer. Whatever he said, I did. He was truly The Professor.

By the week of the fight, I had put aside visions of Chavez as a legend and prepared to fight the man. That remained my mindset for all but one fleeting instant when I first stepped into the ring. As I looked across to the other corner and saw him, I was 10 years old again, thinking, *That's the great Julio Cesar Chavez. He can't be real.*

But I caught myself, refocused, and when the opening bell rang, I was ready.

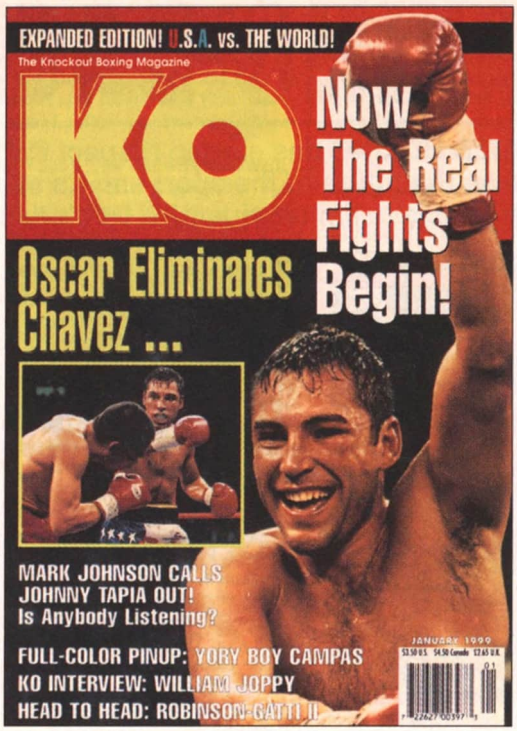
I boxed well in the opening rounds, blunting every charge of the old bull as

if I was wearing the red cape. I didn't feel the bitter sting of those trademark bodyshots. Instead, he felt the sting of my jab. I used it to open a cut over his left eye in the first round. By the fourth, with Chavez' face covered in blood, the fight was stopped.

Pride would be the last thing to go with this warrior. He later claimed he already had the cut when he entered the ring, that it had been caused by his young son bouncing on his knee and then jerking his head backward, smashing into Chavez' eyebrow.

I've heard a lot of excuses by a lot of fighters over the years, but that had to be the lamest.

As an added bonus, I won Chavez' WBC 140-pound title, giving me championships in three weight classes.



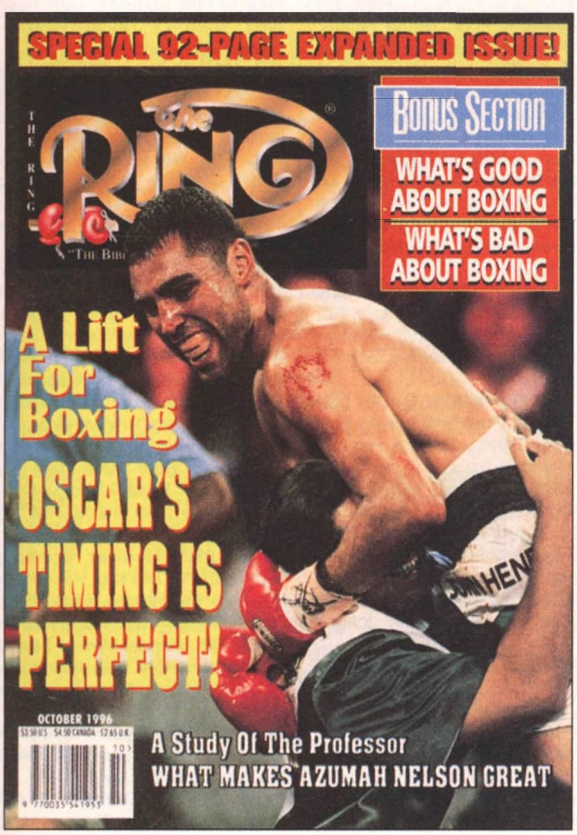
While there were blue skies ahead for me, there was nothing but a cloud of gloom hanging over the Mexican boxing community. They took it out on me. Hadn't I proven my worth to them? Forget it.

When I came home, my peers were on the bandwagon, but the older generation had a hard time accepting Chavez' defeat.

"Who are you to beat our champion?" they said. "That wasn't the real Chavez. And it wasn't even you who beat him. It was his kid."

They really believed that.

I had believed Mexican fans would finally accept me, but I was fooling myself. It was worse after the fight.



Several months later, I was grand marshal of the annual holiday parade in East L.A. Riding in a car with my father, I was booed. People threw fruit at me and yelled that I hadn't really beaten their champion. Police had to surround my car. My father yelled back, telling my detractors to shut up.

I couldn't understand why they were acting that way. I'm one of you, is what I wanted to say.

I found myself having argument after argument with older people around the neighborhood, always forced to defend myself.

"Where were your kids born?" I would say.

"Here in East L.A.," they would admit.

"So what's the problem?" I would ask. "I was born here too. My parents are Mexican, just like you."

"Don't tell me you're a Mexican," they would say. "You're a *pocho*. You're a *gringo*."

"I'm an American," I would say, my voice rising. "What's wrong with that? I'm the same as your kids."

"That's different," they would insist.

It was a pointless argument, but one I couldn't seem to escape. I don't think my father ever really understood the problem. He was born in Mexico, plain and simple. But me, what was I? Was I an American? Was I a Mexican?

I was mad, I'll tell you that. Mad enough to want to beat their hero once again, to show I had Mexican blood in me as well.

My chance came two years later when Chavez and I had a rematch. Forget the boxing and the moving, the fancy footwork and the quick fists, I told myself as I prepared for the second fight. This time, I was going to stand in front of Chavez, toe-to-toe, and show those Mexican fans I could fight his fight. I could be just as macho as Chavez.

That's what happened. I stood in front of him in a test of wills. I have to admit, he took some blows that would have put anybody else down. I remember landing my 45 punch four or five times flush on his jaw. The old guy still had granite in his chin and a heavy, solid punch emanating from his fists. He caught me with a right hand that caused me to see stars. I was dizzy, but, fortunately, he wasn't able to follow up. Finally, Chavez blinked first. He's the one who didn't come out for the ninth round.

He hadn't acknowledged my victory in the first fight. He was too busy looking for an excuse, which he found in his son. And in the press conferences prior to the second fight, Chavez acted as if the first fight hadn't even happened. But after the rematch, he told me, "You beat me. You are a great fighter."

The torch had finally been passed. ■

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Sept. 1983: Larry Holmes: Fading At 33? Plus: Michael Dokes, Greg Page, Gomez-LaPorte, Mike McCallum.

Dec. 1983: What I Learned And Why I'll Come Back All The Way, By Gerry Cooney. Plus: McCrory-Jones, Hagler-Duran preview, legendary heavyweights vs. today's heavyweights.

Jan. 1984: Pryor-Arguello II. Plus: Mancini-Chacon, Gerry Coetzee, Nino LaRocca, Ray Mancini.

Feb. 1984: Gerrie Coetzee Looks Toward Larry Holmes: Headed For The Explosive Heavyweight Superfight. Plus: Tony Sibson, George Foreman, Aaron Pryor, Lupe Aquino, Joe Frazier.

April 1984: 1983—The Year In Review. Plus: Chandler-Muniz, Sugar Ray Leonard, Steve Cruz, Larry Holmes.

Sept. 1984: The Comeback Of Sugar Ray Leonard. Color/Wilfredo Gomez. Plus: Michael Dokes, Milton McCrory, Donald Curry.

Nov. 1984: Aaron Pryor: A Superstar In Search Of A Showdown. Plus: Livingstone Bramble, Costello-Shields, Jake LaMotta, Tony Tucker, Marvin Hagler, Holmes-Coetzee.

Dec. 1984: John Mugabi Feasts On Animal Fletcher: The Beast Is Hungry For Big Game. Color/Ray Leonard. Plus: Roberto Duran, Hagler-Hearns.

Jan. 1985: Thomas Hearns Sends A Message To Marvin Hagler: "The Hitman Will Get You Next!" Plus: Pinklon Thomas, Harry Arroyo, David Bey, Bramble-Crawley.

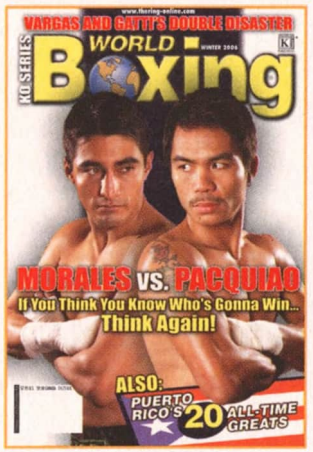
Feb. 1985: Marvin Hagler Vows: "Thomas Hearns Is Doomed!" Plus: Gerry Cooney, Thomas Hearns, John Mugabi, Ray Seales, Mike McCallum.

March 1985: Blood And Guts Against The Bonecrusher: Larry Holmes—A Champion Ready To Fall? Plus: Sugar Ray Leonard, Olympians, "Upset Saturday," Juan Meza.

April 1985: Cooney vs. Page: The $10-Million Challenge! Plus: Hagler-Hearns, Year In Review.

May 1985: Who's The Baddest? Preview Of The Hagler-Hearns Superfight. Plus: Hector Camacho, Arroyo-Alli, boxing mysteries.

June 1985: Donald Curry: A Hot Fighter As Cool As Ice. Plus: Hagler-Hearns, Greg Page, Gerry Coetzee, Carl Williams.



Winter 2006

July 1985: Sensational Hector Camacho: Poised For The Lightweight Throne. Plus: John Mugabi, Larry Holmes, superfights, Donald Curry, Gerry Cooney.

Sept. 1985: A Career In Ruins? Gerry Cooney: Time Is Running Out. Plus: Holmes-Williams, Thomas Hearns, overrated & underrated.

Oct. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "I'm The Real Heavyweight Champion." Plus: Larry Holmes, McGuigan-Pedroza, Aaron Pryor, Billy Costello.

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Feb. 1986: Heavyweight King Michael Spinks: His Formula For A Successful Title Reign. Plus: Barry McGuigan, Azumah Nelson, Hector Camacho, Jimmy Paul.

March 1986: Michael Spinks' Own Story: From The Streetlight To The Spotlight. Plus: Barry McGuigan, Camacho-Rosario, Pernell Whitaker.

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Dec. 1993: Riddick Bowe's Year In Preview: Lennox Lewis Is The Least Of His Problems. Plus: Michael Carbajal, Ali-Foreman, Ricardo Lopez, Larry Hazzard.

Feb. 1994: Chavez-Whitaker: Was The Fix In? Plus: Chiquita Gonzalez, over-rated/underrated, Corbett-Choynski.

April 1994: Hungry At The Wrong Time: Has Riddick Bowe Become The New Buster Douglas? Plus: Michael Bentt, Buddy McGirt, Jorge Luis Gonzalez, George Dixon, Joe Gans, Joe Walcott.

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Oct. 1994: Michael Moorer's Image: Is It All Shadow & Light? Plus: Evander Holyfield, Egerton Marcus, John Michael Johnson, Gorilla Jones, Bowe-Donald preview.

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Feb. 1995 (84-Page Special): The Experts Debate: Pernell Whitaker—The Greatest Fighter Of His Era ... Or The Most Overrated? Plus: Greatest fighters who never won title, boxing's bad boys, pro debuts, Bruce Flowers.

April 1995: George Foreman (1974) vs. George Foreman (1995). Plus: Riddick Bowe, cheap-shot artists, catchweight fights, Young Peter Jackson.

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Fall 2000: 10 Reasons Mike Tyson Can Beat Lennox Lewis. Plus: Arturo Gatti, Felix Trinidad, Mike Griffith.

[All-color beginning with the March 2001 issue]

March 2001: The Ultimate Boxing Ratings. Plus: Tyson-Golota, Marco Antonio Barrera, Joel Cassamayor.

Nov. 2001: It's Time To Flex Your Muscles, Roy: Fight The Trinidad-Hopkins Winner Next! Plus: Laila-Jacqui, Floyd Mayweather, greatest upsets.

July 2002: Jones vs. Hopkins: What Will Happen When The Trash Talk Stops. Plus: Forrest-Mosley, Arturo Gatti, Wayne McCullough, De La Hoya-Vargas preview, great junior middleweight moments.

Nov. 2002: Lennox Lewis—Is He The Best Heavyweight Since Muhammad Ali? Plus: Naseem Hamed, Kostya Tszyu, Diobelys Hurtado, Rocky Juarez, 10 fights that transcended boxing.

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Dec. 2004: What's Next? Has Mike Tyson Run Out Of Options? Plus: Gatti & Leija, Kermit Cintron, Floyd Mayweather, British boxing slump, ultimate ratings, featherweight report card.

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Winter 2006: Morales vs. Pacquiao: If You Think You Know Who's Gonna Win ... Think Again! Plus: Vargas & Gatti, Angelo Dundee, Carl Froch, second-generation fighters, fighting past 40, 20 greatest Puerto Ricans.

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❑ NOV/84	❑ APR/87	❑ JUN/92	❑ SPR/97	❑ SUM/06
❑ DEC/84	❑ MAY/87	❑ AUG/92	❑ SUM/97	❑ WIN/06
❑ JAN/85	❑ JUN/87	❑ OCT/92	❑ FAL/97	
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❑ SEP/85	❑ JUN/89	❑ FEB/94	❑ WIN/99	
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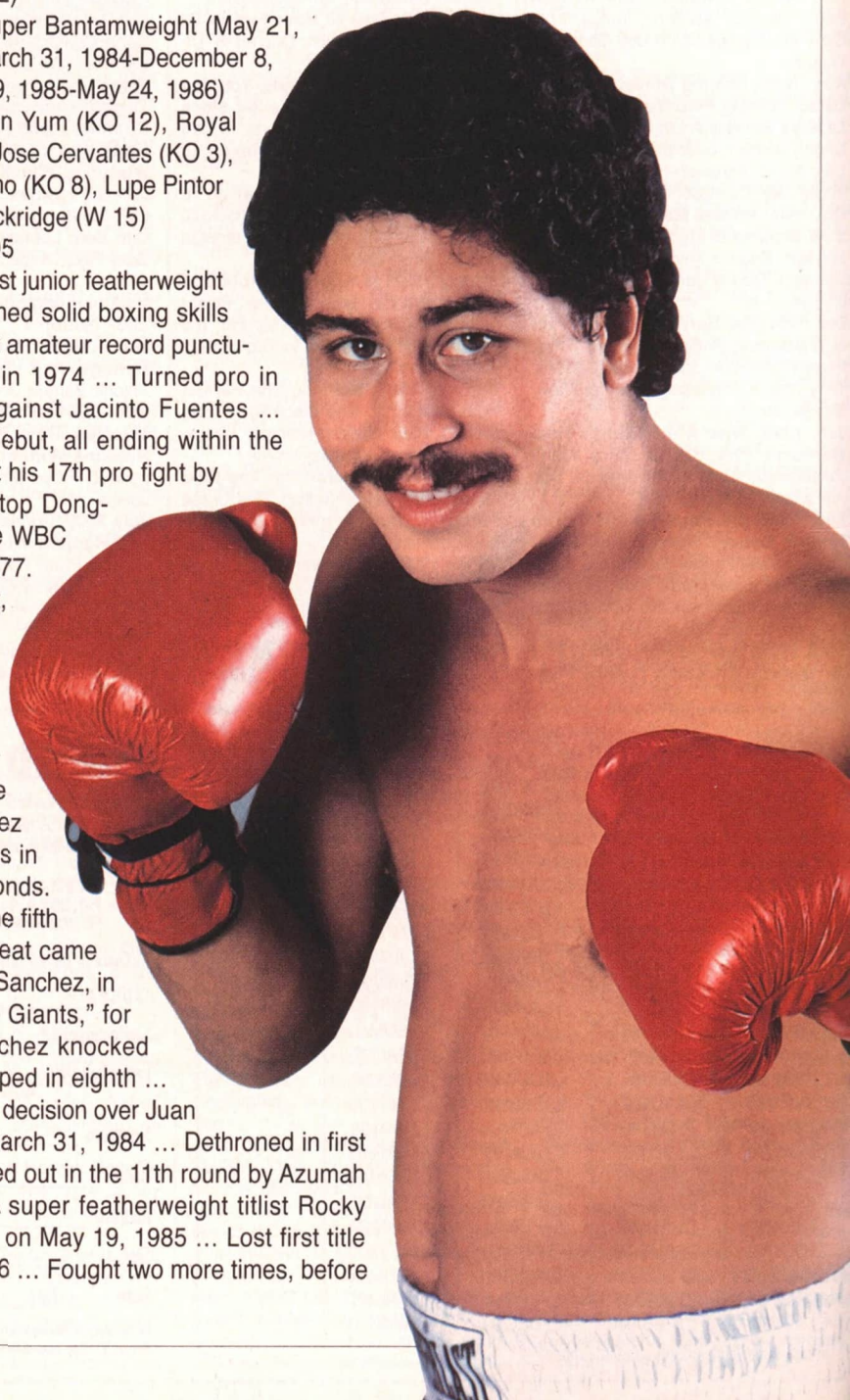
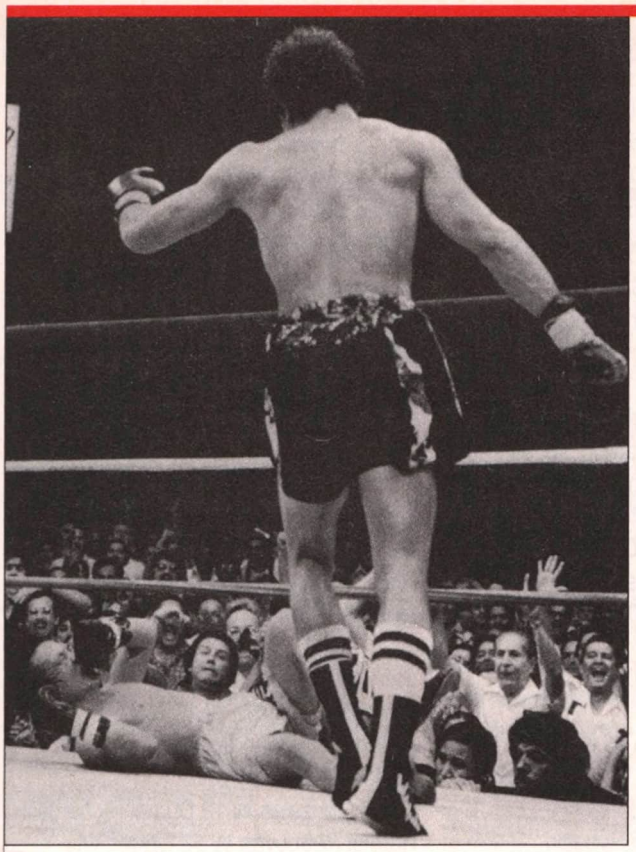
Hall of Fame Profile

THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

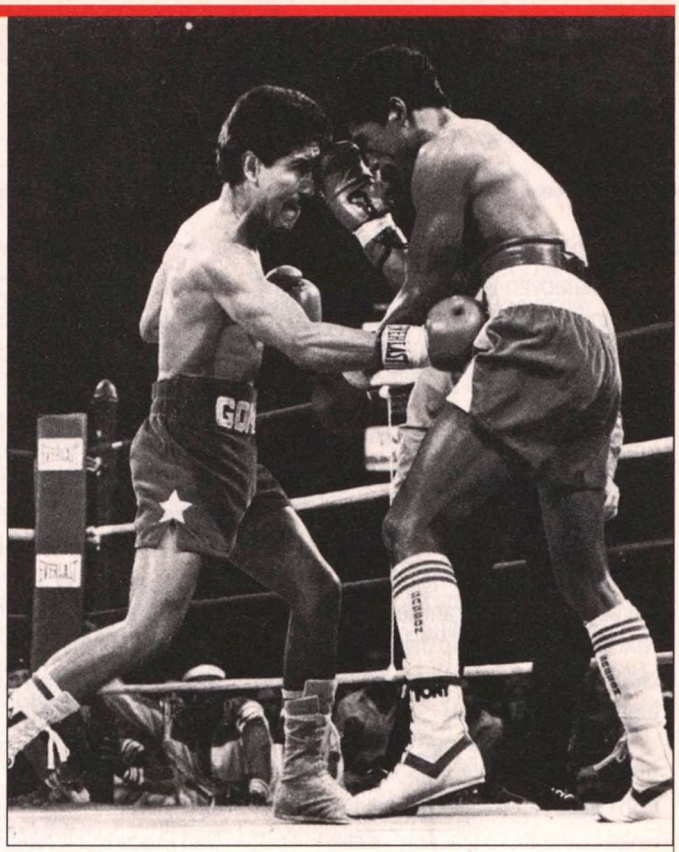
Wilfredo Gomez

Birthdate: October 29, 1956
Birthplace: Las Monjas, Puerto Rico
Nickname: Bazooka
Weight Class: Junior Featherweight
Height: 5'5"
Professional Record: 44-3-1 (42)
Professionals Titles: WBC Super Bantamweight (May 21, 1977-April 1983), WBC featherweight (March 31, 1984-December 8, 1984), WBC Super Featherweight (May 19, 1985-May 24, 1986)
Best Performances: Dong-Kyun Yum (KO 12), Royal Kobayashi (KO 3), Carlos Zarate (KO 5), Jose Cervantes (KO 3), Juan "Kid" Meza (KO 6), Roberto Rubaldino (KO 8), Lupe Pintor (KO 14), Juan LaPorte (W 12), Rocky Lockridge (W 15)
Year Of IBHOF Induction: 1995
Background: Was named the greatest junior featherweight in history by THE RING in 1994 ... Combined solid boxing skills with variety of powerpunches ... Excellent amateur record punctuated by world amateur title in Havana in 1974 ... Turned pro in November '74 with a six-round draw against Jacinto Fuentes ... Embarked on 32-fight win streak after debut, all ending within the distance ... Won first of three titles in just his 17th pro fight by overcoming first-round knockdown to stop Dong-Kyun Yum in the 12th round to claim the WBC super bantamweight belt on May 21, 1977. Yum controlled early portions of the fight, before Gomez' superior firepower took over in the fourth ... Went on to a record 17 successful junior featherweight title defenses ... Handed Hall of Famer Carlos Zarate his first defeat in sixth title defense with a fifth-round stoppage. Zarate controlled first three rounds, before Gomez erupted to knock down Zarate three times in the fourth, which lasted an extra 15 seconds. Gomez floored Zarate one more time in the fifth before the fight was stopped ... First defeat came against another Hall of Famer, Salvadore Sanchez, in a fight dubbed "The Battle Of The Little Giants," for Sanchez' WBC featherweight title. Sanchez knocked down Gomez twice before fight was stopped in eighth ... Captured second title by scoring 12-round decision over Juan LaPorte for WBC featherweight belt on March 31, 1984 ... Dethroned in first defense nine months later, getting knocked out in the 11th round by Azumah Nelson ... Won third belt, beating WBA super featherweight titlist Rocky Lockridge by 15-round majority decision on May 19, 1985 ... Lost first title defense to Alfredo Layne on May 24, 1986 ... Fought two more times, before retiring after 1989 kayo of Mario Salazar.

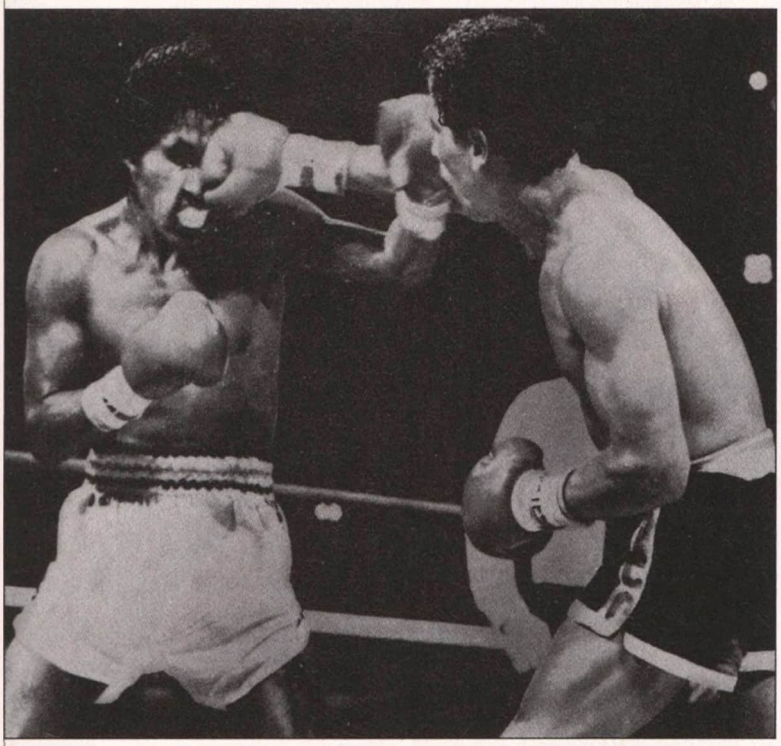




Gomez had to come off the canvas in the first round to stop Dong-Kyun Yum in the 12th round in 1977. "Bazooka" had trouble in the early portion of the fight, before his superior punching power enabled him to claim the WBC super bantamweight belt.



Gomez goes to the beltline against Juan LaPorte en route to snaring the WBC featherweight title by 12-round decision in 1984.



Gomez nails Lupe Pintor with a right during a defense of the WBC super bantam title. Gomez' 14th-round stoppage of Pintor marked the last time he fought in that weight class.

One great to another: Gomez, a bit rounder six years after his retirement, poses with another all-time great, Sandy Saddler, at the Hall of Fame Weekend in Canastota, New York, in 1995. Bazooka was a first-ballot inductee.

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Artur Marabyan W 12 Roman Dabolins
Alexander Dimitrenko KO 5 Derric Rossy
Franklin Lawrence KO 5 Carlos Barnett
Alexey Soloviev KO 3 Raymond Ochieng
Francesco Pianeta KO 2 Michael Marrone

Cruiserweights

Firat Arslan W 12 Darnell Wilson
Marco Huck KO 9 Frantisek Kasanic
Nuri Seferi W 12 Josip Jalusic
Neil Simpson KO 10 Nick Okoth
Merick Roberge KO 9 Christophe Dettinger
Vitaliy Rusal KO 7 Armen Azizian
Bob Gasio KO 6 Sakeasi Dakua
Enad Licina KO 3 DeLeon Tinsley
Andres Franco KO 1 Nicasio Martinez
Alexander Frenkel KO 1 Cory Phelps
Jean Marc Monrose KO 1 Johny Jensen

Light Heavyweights

Shaun George KO 9 Chris Byrd
Will McIntyre W 12 Zane Marks
Mahamed Aripgadzhiev W 12 Vasyl Kondor
Robert Rolle KO 12 Orhan Ajvazoski
Rod Anderton W 10 Hamed Jamali
J.J. Ojuederie W 10 Andrew Lowe
Andre Dirrell KO 5 Anthony Hanshaw
Artem Solomko W 10 Dmitry Adamovich
Tyrone Wright W 10 Paul David
Rudolf Asaturyan W 10 Vasily Andriyanov
Sergey Demchenko KO 4 Drago Janjusevic
Rashad Karimov KO 5 Ali Kiroglu

Super Middleweights

Carl Froch KO 4 Albert Rybacki
Nikola Sjekloca W 12 Roberto Cocco
Daniel McKinnon W 12 Shane Chapman
Felipe Romero W 12 Hugo Lomeli
Israel Kani KO 5 Kerey Palmer
Mohammad Said KO 4 Antonio Tintiliano
Marcus Johnson KO 4 Anthony Greeley
Christian Pawlak KO 4 Mirko Kern
Dmitri Sukhotskiy KO 3 Mbaruku Kheri
Peter Manfredo Jr. KO 3 Luis Lopez
Jorge Olivera KO 2 Roberto De Jesus

Middleweights

Favio Medina KO 4 David Obregon
Rocky Junior KO 2 Carlos Oliveira
Avtandil Khurtsidze KO 2 Ferenc Olah

Junior Middleweights

Oscar De La Hoya W 12 Steve Forbes
Alejandro Hernandez W 12 Jose Cuadros
Jesus Gonzales W 12 Durrell Richardson
Hamlet Petrosyan W 12 Cedric Vitu
Vilmos Balog W 12 Turgay Uzun
Pawel Wolak W 10 Troy Browning
Rafael Pintos W 10 Alejandro Falliga

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Junior lightweight Yuriorkis Gamboa rips into Darling Jimenez

Joel Julio W 10 Ishe Smith
Ray Sanchez W 10 Patrick Thompson
Andrei Rimer KO 7 Baker Barakat
Diego Gallardo KO 2 Ulises Lopez
Daniel Dawson KO 8 Sintung Kietbusaba
Alfredo Angulo KO 5 Richard Gutierrez
Ramadhan Miyeyusho KO 4
Haji Kiyeyeu
James Kirkland KO 1 Eromosele Albert

Welterweights

Jackson Bonsu W 12 Viktor Plotnikov
Antonin Decarie W 12 Brian Camechis
Adnan Amar W 10 Mark Lloyd
Oliver Guettel W 10 Ilian Aries
Paul Burns W 10 Gavin Tait
Idrissa Kabore KO 9 Badre Belhadja
Luciano Abis KO 9 Louis Mimoune
Mike Alvarado KO 7 Michel Rosales
Matthias Pelk KO 7 Enrico Kniesch
Christian Bladt KO 6 Norman Schuster
Azad Azizov KO 6 Suleyman Dag
Oyewale Omotoso KO 3
Glen Masicampo
Zapir Gereev KO 1 Mkwanda Matumla
Welson Oliveira KO 1 Denis De Barros
Sven Paris W 8 Freddy Curiel
Mike Jones W 8 Gilbert Venegas
Danny Garcia W 6 Julia Gamboa

Junior Welterweights

Timothy Bradley W 12 Junior Witter
(*Wins WBC Title*)
Mike Arnaoutis W 12 Lanardo Tyner
Francisco Figueroa W 12 Luis Rodriguez
Gianluca Branco W 12 Colin Lynes
Brunet Zamora W 12 Andrzej Sark
Sergey Fedchenko W 12 Peter Semo
Martin Watson W 10 Chris Long
Khoirul Huda KO 4 Ramadhan Weriu
Jeffrey Resto W 10 Hector Alatorre
Tomoyuki Shiotani W 10 Hirobumi Ito
Norio Kimura KO 5 Daigoro Yamamoto
Victor Ortiz KO 5 Dairo Esalas

Lightweights

Jose Reyes W 12 Noe Bolanos
Yusuke Kobori KO 3 Jose Alfaro
Rene Mahling D 10 Charles Damas
Mickey Bey Jr. W 10 Wilson Alcorro
Vicente Escobedo W 10
Roberto David Arrieta
Ali Chusseinov KO 9 Omari Ramadan
Ramona Kuehne W 10 Galina Ivanova
Michael Lozada KO 6 Mario Mondragon
Yusuke Kobori KO 3 Jose Alfaro
Lazaro Dominguez KO 2 Gilton Cardoso
Giovanni Niro D 10
Massimiliano Chiofalo
Santos Martinez KO 9 Jose Miranda
Wes Ferguson W 8
Miguel Angel Munguia
Rafael Guzman KO 6 Jorge Martinez
Amon Baloyi KO 4 Irvin Buhlalu
Erin McGowan KO 1
Kwanpirom Muangroied

Junior Lightweights

Yuriorkis Gamboa W 10 Darling Jimenez
Brandon Rios W 10 Ricardo Dominguez
Yoshimitsu Yashiro KO 5
Kiyohisa Morita
Mohamed Elomar KO 1 Brendan Batty
Ji-Hoon Kim KO 1 Koba Gogoladze
Eduardo Escobedo KO 1 Javier Cintron
Koji Kawamura W 8 Keisuke Akiba
Cesar Romero KO 3 Vicente Rodriguez
David Gomez KO 3 Marcos Badillo

Featherweights

Jorge Solis W 10 Miguel Roman
Muhammad Afrizal W 12 Jack Asis
Paul Truscott W 12 Osumanu Akaba
Ardi Diego KO 7 Imam Syafi'i
Victor Cardozo KO 2 Arnaldo Orrabalis
Wajib Suswanto KO 2 Theophilus Quaye
Wellem Reik KO 2 Narko Arema

Junior Featherweights

Jhonny Gonzalez KO 4
Mauricio Pastrana
Giovanni Caro KO 11 Ricardo Castillo
Jackie Nava W 10 Yazmin Rivas
Sergio Medina W 10 Carlos Arnaldi
Antonio Escalante KO 3 David Martinez
Rendall Munroe KO 7 Salem Bouaita

Bantamweights

Ian Napa W 12 Colin Moffett
Nehomar Cermeno W 10
Marco Hernandez
Manami Arima W 10 Eun-Young Kim
Diego Loto KO 6 Diego Hernandez
Francisco Arce KO 4 Oswaldo Rodriguez
Masaki Kawabata KO 6 Shun Hashiguchi

Junior Bantamweights

Cristian Mijares W 12 Alexander Munoz
(*Retains WBC Title; Wins WBA Title*)
Jorge Arce W 12 Devid Lookmahanak
Simphiwe Nongqayi W 12 Julio Ler
Alesia Graf KO 5 Rosillette Dos Santos
Irma Sanchez W 10 Magaly Avalos

Flyweights

Omar Narvaez KO 8 Ivan Pozo
Brian Viloria KO 3 Fred Valdez
Hernan Marquez KO 9
Jorge Lopez Palafox
Bernard Inom KO 8 Andrea Sarritzu
Nerys Espinoza KO 5 Oscar Murillo
Julio Miranda KO 5 Omar Salado

Junior Flyweights

Rodel Mayol KO 5 Wisan Sor Suchanya
Decky Putra KO 7 Jack Ortega
Bert Batawang KO 4
Samransak Singmanassak
Masayoshi Segawa KO 2
Monkoldetch Patavikorngym

Strawweights

Marti Polii W 12 Johan Wahyudi
Erik Ramirez KO 2 Luis Perez

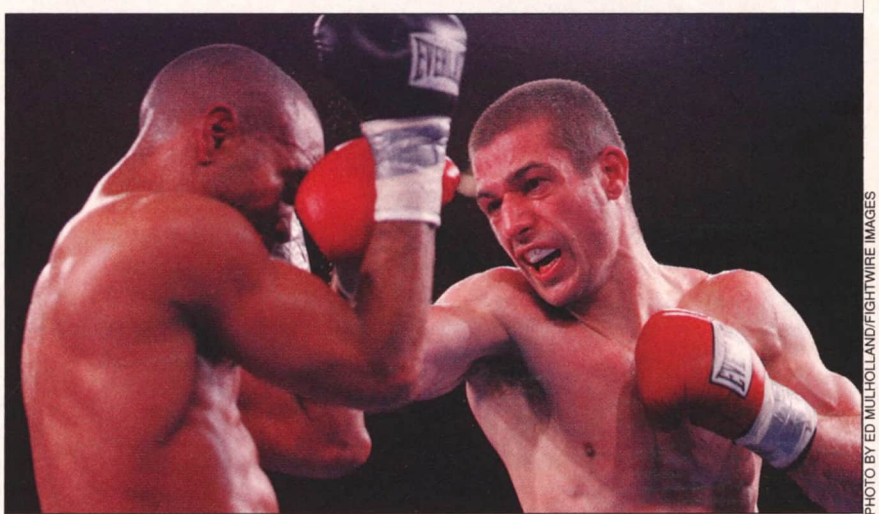


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Junior welterweight Mike Arnaoutis stuns Lanardo Tyner.

Timothy Bradley W 12 Junior Witter

Nottingham, England: Untested at the top level and dismissed as a 6-1 underdog, Bradley, 139¼, Palm Springs, California, delivered a career-best performance in his opponent's backyard to claim the WBC super lightweight title from Witter, 139¼, Bradford, England, at the Nottingham Arena. Witter's third defense of the title, which he won against DeMarcus Corley in 2006, was one of the poorest performances of his career and ended any hope he retained of securing a showdown with world junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton, his countryman and arch-rival.

Although Witter, 36-2-2 (21), did not offer any excuses, it came out afterward that his father, with whom he has a very close relationship, had been diagnosed recently with a serious illness. This may have affected his focus. But Bradley, 22-0 (11), had his own problems, too, as he had to face far and away the most accomplished opponent of his career, having never before fought outside of his native California. An elimination bout against Jose Luis Castillo fell through in March when the Mexican failed to make weight, so Bradley was thrust straight into this stern examination, though he coped admirably.

There was little hint of the danger to come in the opening round. Witter managed to control the range and set up Bradley for a solid left cross to the jaw, which caused the challenger's knees to dip. But Bradley, quite ominously, began to find a place for his right hand counters in round two, and Witter never found a way to evade this punch. Pulling back his head, which he did regularly, only presented a bigger target to the grateful challenger.

Witter was also unable to pin down the nimble Bradley or mount any sustained assault and this became increasingly frustrating. "He was harder to hit cleanly than I thought he would be," Witter reflected. "My timing just wasn't there tonight."

Bradley's elusiveness, speed, punch placement, and deceptive power—especially in his right hand—added to Witter's frustration and he missed wildly with a right uppercut and left hook in round four before Bradley punished him with a left and right to the head. Bradley continued to achieve success in the fifth, landing another left hook to Witter's jaw, but it was his right hand over the top that proved to be the most significant punch of the fight, especially when he landed it near the end of the sixth round on the side of Witter's head. The Briton went crashing to the floor and he was clearly hurt, though he beat the count of Italian referee Massimo Barrovecchio.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Bradley attacks Witter en route to major upset

"He pulls back with his chin in the air, so I figured to fire the right hand, a punch that I've worked on in the gym after watching his tapes, and in the fight it worked like a charm," said Bradley. "I kept jabbing to the body to set him up for the right over the top, and I knew I hurt him as soon as I landed it in the sixth round. But he's a champion and he got back on his feet and fought back hard. But I was coming on strong and he wasn't able to hold me off."

Bradley landed another overhand right at the start of the seventh, but Witter rode the punch and managed to survive. But he was unable to raise his game, and when he got rocked again by a left hook in round 10, his hold of the title was slipping away. Another right hand stunned him in round 11, and Bradley's victory was assured when Witter could not achieve the stoppage that he required in the 12th.

Franco Ciminale (Italy) surprisingly scored 115-112 for Witter, but Omar Minton (USA) and Daniel Van de Wiele (Belgium) scored 115-113 and 114-113, respectively, for Bradley. THE RING also scored for Bradley by 115-112.

"I don't think [Hatton] will fight me now," Witter admitted. "But there is still a lot more in the tank and I'll be back as world champion. This was just a bad day at the office."

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Hennessy Sports**
(5-10-08)
Brian Doogan

Carl Froch KO 4 Albert Rybacki

Nottingham, England: With world light heavyweight and super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe lining up a future fight against either Roy Jones or Kelly Pavlik, either of which could be his last, Froch, Nottingham, England, is maneuvering himself into position to be on top when the Welshman brings to an end his Hall of Fame career. A powerful puncher, athletic and technically capable, the 30-year-old Englishman is mandatory challenger for the WBC super middleweight belt held by Calzaghe and he is definitely not lacking in confidence.

"I think Joe would rather give up the belt than fight me because I'm too fresh and too dangerous," Froch, 167¼,

[THE RING Fighter of the Month]

Timothy Bradley

It's not supposed to work like this. You're not supposed to be able to go directly from beating journeymen and fellow prospects into a fight with a championship-level opponent and win. Sure, Floyd Mayweather did it against Genaro Hernandez, and George Foreman did it against Joe Frazier, and Evander Holyfield did it against Dwight Qawi, but those guys are special. Timothy Bradley was not considered special, and his making the leap to face Junior Witter, regarded by many as the most dangerous fighter at 140 pounds, was generally perceived as career suicide.

Maybe Bradley has the potential to be a little more special than we all realized. At the very least, he's a smart, determined fighter who came in with a game plan and did all the right things to beat a titleholder who seemed to be taking him lightly. Bradley figured out how to neutralize Witter's speed, adapted to the Brit's affection for switching stances, and timed him for big punches. A sixth-round knockdown paved the way for a 12-round decision victory (Bradley's first time going past 10), and all of the prefight talk about "too much, too soon" quickly became laughable.

Bradley wasn't supposed to be ready for someone like Witter. But as long as the underdog believes otherwise, the upset is always possible.

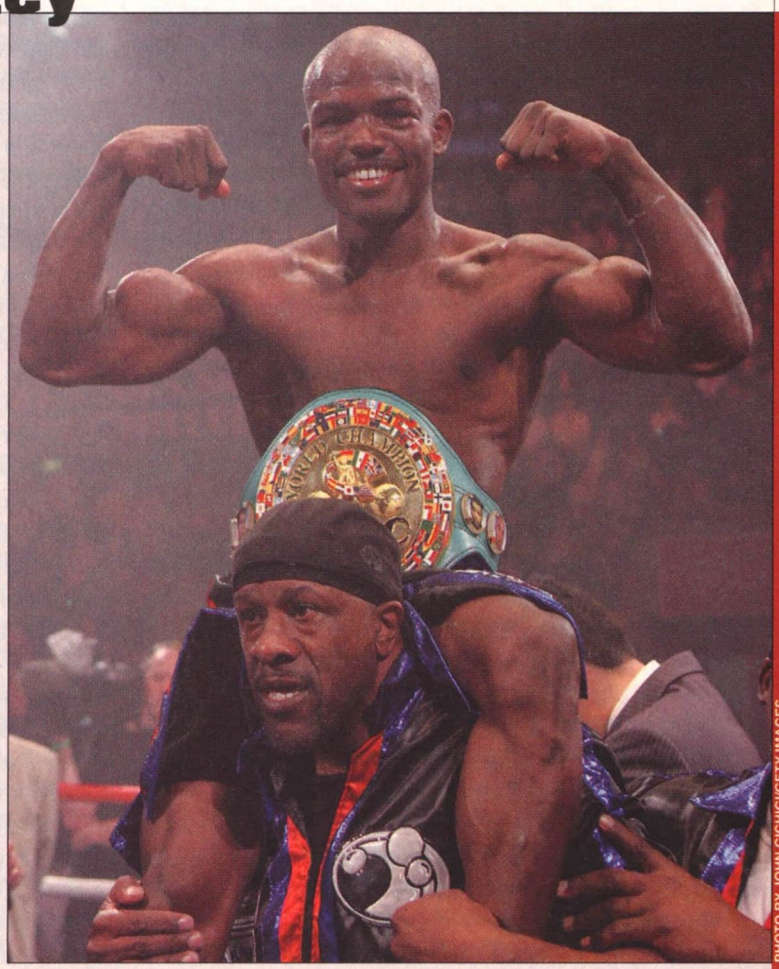


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Late-sub Rybacki samples Froch's left hook

said after stopping 37-year-old late substitute Rybacki, 168½, Katowice, Poland, at the Nottingham Arena. "But I'm still holding on to that little chance that he may defend rather than vacate the title. Whatever he does, I'm ready to fight one of the top super middleweights, even Mikkel Kessler, whom I'm sure I would stop. He struggled in the late rounds of his fight against Calzaghe and maybe he finds it hard at the weight because he is a big man. I don't think he would go the distance against me, because I hit far harder than Calzaghe can."

Through no fault of his own, his claims are more substantial than his body of work so far. A shot Robin Reid and a faded Brian Magee are the most notable names on his record, though he was scheduled to meet Germany-based Russian Dennis Inkin in a WBC final eliminator before Inkin pulled out of the bout twice due to injury. Former IBF super middleweight titleholder Alejandro Berrio from Colombia refused an offer to come to England, and American Rubin Williams was unable to travel to the U.K., so the unproven Rybacki, 15-1 (8), became his last-minute opponent.

Predictably, Froch handled him as he pleased, with little by way of retaliation coming from the Pole, who was too preoccupied with his own survival. Froch's strong jab dictated the exchanges, and he hurt Rybacki with a left hook to the body near the end of the first round. Rybacki fell to the floor in round two, but referee John Keane (England) ruled that he had slipped, and, although the Pole started to offer some offense in the third, Froch quickly put him in his place with a couple of well-placed bodyshots. Another attack, culminating in a right uppercut to the jaw, had Rybacki in trouble, but he saw out the round.

His stay of execution was brief, however, for Froch mounted another sustained assault in round four and he was landing big punches at will when Keane intervened at the 2:35 mark.

"I had not fought for six months and it's all about keeping the momentum going now because it's been frustrating having to hang around," said Froch, 23-0 (19). "I don't care who I have to fight as long as I get my shot at the title. I'm the best super middleweight in the world, so bring them on."

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Hennessy Sports**
(5-10-08)
Brian Doogan

Tomasz Adamek KO 8 O'Neil Bell

Katowice, Poland: After losing the WBC light heavyweight title on points to Connecticut's Chad Dawson in February 2007, Adamek, 197¾, Gilowice, Poland, decided to step up to cruiserweight and he moved into range of a title shot with a convincing victory over an apparently shopworn Bell, 199, Atlanta, Georgia, via Jamaica. The former world cruiserweight champion indicated to American referee Robert Byrd that he could not continue after the seventh round at the Spodek Arena.

Adamek is likely to challenge IBF cruiserweight titleholder Steve Cunningham later this year after dominating this elimination bout. The 33-year-old Bell captured the undisputed title in January 2006 when he stopped Jean-Marc Mormeck of France in the 10th round, but he dropped a decision in the rematch in March 2007 and had not fought since. Adamek, 31, claimed the vacant WBC light heavyweight title in May 2005, when he outpointed Australian Paul Briggs, and defended the belt twice before losing to Dawson. Since moving to cruiserweight, he had won twice against mediocre opposition.

"I am very excited about returning to Poland for this bout against a very good fighter, and I need to win to get another title shot," said Adamek beforehand.

He managed to curb his excitement and begin the first round seriously focused, so much so that he caught Bell with a sharp left that knocked him to the floor. Bell appeared to be caught off-guard, but it was an ominous development so early in the fight, particularly as he had started so aggressively by attacking Adamek with right hands that backed him up. But the Pole's speed became a dominant factor in the second round, and he caught Bell with a series of solid combinations while his opponent was unable to get his own punches off.

Bell, 26-3-1 (24), had some success in round three. He exerted pressure on Adamek, 34-1 (23), and landed several right hands, but Adamek remained averse to fighting him

on the inside where Bell might have made his strength count. Instead, Adamek utilized his jab and stayed on the outside, landing some good left hooks as well in the fourth, and he weathered the storm in the sixth when Bell put together another sequence of damaging right hands.

Bell was unable to sustain his effort, and Adamek began to control the exchanges from range again in the seventh, augmenting his jab with stinging left hooks and making Bell miss with his heavy right hands, which had lost much of their potency and accuracy. When the round ended, Bell stood in his corner and shook his head, ignoring his cornermen's urges to sit down and prepare for the next round. He had simply had enough, and he signaled his intentions to referee Byrd that he would not come out for round eight, at which point the bout was stopped. Adamek was leading on the judges' scorecards by six points, two points, and four points.

"I've shown that I can overcome one of the top guys in this division and I'm ready for Cunningham now," said Adamek.

Television: **ESPN Classic**
Promoters: **Main Events, Ziggy Promotions, Seminole Warriors Boxing, Knockout Promotions**
(4-19-08)
Brian Doogan

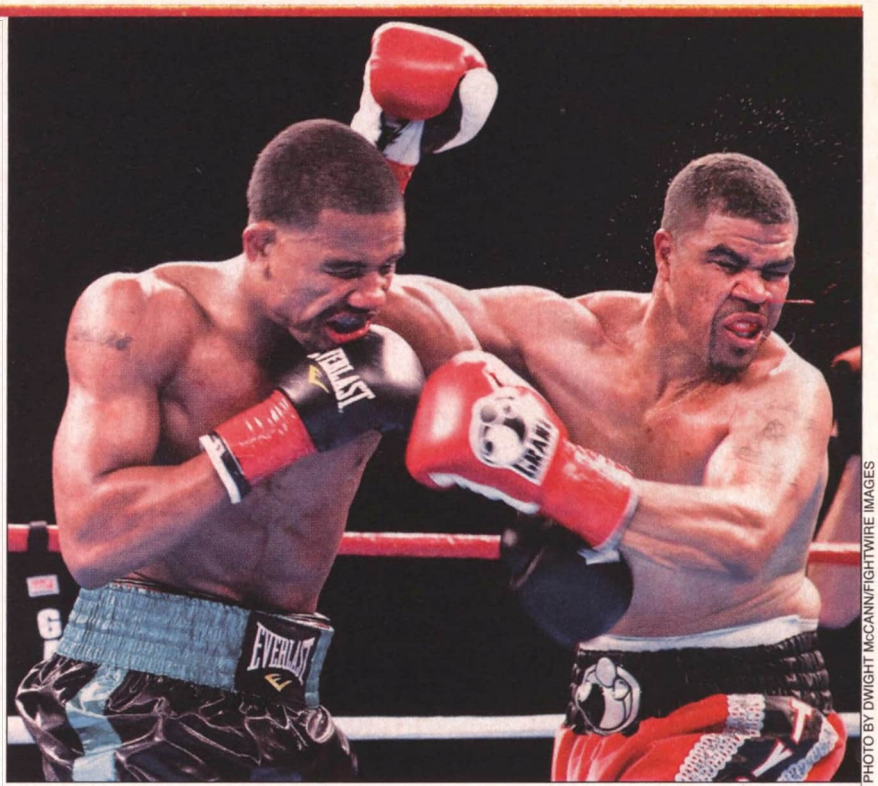


PHOTO BY DWIGHT McCANN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Dirrell turns in career-best performance against Hanshaw

Andre Dirrell KO 5 Anthony Hanshaw

Santa Ynez, California: If you believe in the old maxim that "you're only as good as your last fight," then 2004 Olympic bronze medalist Dirrell was a dreadful fighter coming into his bout against Hanshaw at Chumash Casino and is now utterly spectacular. With his future as a marketable TV fighter on the line after as negative a victorious performance as you'll ever see (a 10-round decision win over Curtis Stevens on HBO in June '07), Dirrell delivered against Hanshaw, a capable veteran whose only previous loss came 10 months earlier against Roy Jones.

The Jones-Hanshaw fight had been at light heavyweight and Hanshaw lost a clear but competitive decision. Fighting the smaller Dirrell just above the super middleweight limit, it was thought that Hanshaw's size and experience would give the talented 25-year-old southpaw problems, but Dirrell undid the damage of his previous televised performance and did what Jones couldn't, stopping "Tony The Tiger" in five.

Hanshaw, 169, Warren, Ohio, did the right thing at the outset, jumping on Dirrell, 168¼, Flint, Michigan, and testing the young man's chin and resolve. He trapped Dirrell in a corner, landed a hard left hook, and followed with two more lefts and a glancing right. Dirrell slumped toward the canvas, his right knee and right glove both possibly touching down (replays were inconclusive), but referee Pat Russell (USA) didn't call a knockdown. Still, Hanshaw, 30, controlled most of the round and won it clearly, even if he had to settle for a one-point margin.

In round two, the faster Dirrell started to find his rhythm, switching stances, jabbing effectively, and sealing the round with several lead lefts from the southpaw stance. "The Matrix" knocked Hanshaw off-balance in the third with a left-right combination, and though he was fighting well and controlling the bout, he began to draw the ire of the crowd by taunting Hanshaw. The immaturity he showed against Stevens was surfacing.

A counter left hurt Hanshaw late in the fourth, and Dirrell followed up with another hard left hand just before the bell. Hanshaw appeared to be falling toward the mat and Dirrell ensured his collapse with a push, then landed a left hand after Hanshaw had gone down. Russell called it a knockdown, but also took time to give Dirrell a stern warning for the late punch.

Nevertheless, Dirrell's confidence had grown thanks to his superior speed and his newfound knowledge that he could hurt Hanshaw, and he wasted little time finishing off his opponent in the fifth. A left-right-left salvo did damage along the ropes, and Hanshaw, 21-2-1 (14), tried to spin away but was met with two right jabs and a hard left. With Hanshaw increasingly overwhelmed, Russell stepped in and called a halt at the 1:13 mark.

"I had to redeem myself for the 'loss' I took to Curtis

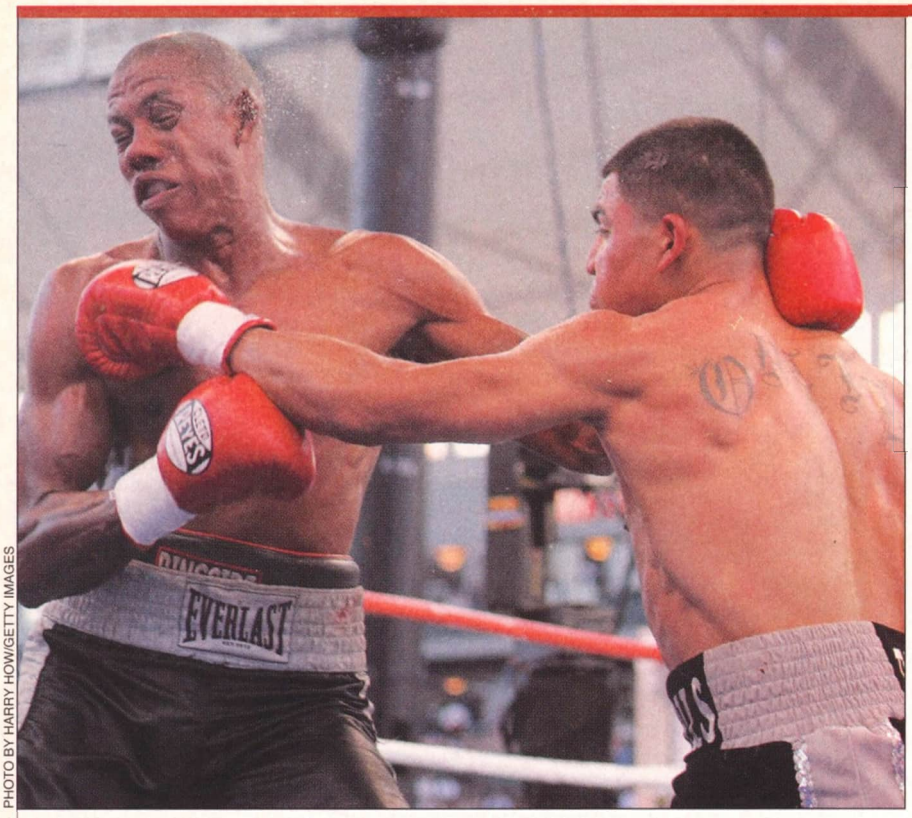


PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Ortiz came off the floor to kayo Esalas

Stevens," said Dirrell, 15-0 (10), afterward. "I felt we both lost that fight and [the fans] didn't see the real Andre Dirrell. They got to see the real Andre Dirrell tonight and they will see more."

Despite a shaky start and a couple of dubious moments (the taunting and the punch while Hanshaw was down), if this was the real Andre Dirrell, fans will indeed want to see more.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**
(5-2-08)

Victor Ortiz KO 5 Dario Esalas

Carson, California: Like the rest of the Golden Boy-promoted fighters on the Oscar De La Hoya-Steve Forbes card at The Home Depot Center, it looked (on paper, at least) like Ortiz was all set for an easy showcase fight. Esalas had lost eight of his previous 10 fights, four by knockout, and wasn't expected to give Ortiz any trouble. But before getting kayoed in the fifth round of a scheduled 10-rounder, the Miami-based Colombian gave "Vicious Victor" a bit of a scare.

Southpaw Ortiz, from nearby Oxnard, got a rousing reception from the announced crowd of 27,000 and went right to work, backing up Esalas and scoring with both hands. It was more of the same in the second, although Ortiz emerged from an accidental clash with a scalp cut.

When Ortiz, 144, floored Esalas, 142, with a left hook in the third round, it looked like the beginning of the end. But Esalas beat American referee Jose Cobian's count, and when Ortiz charged in for the finish, he was greeted by a right hand to the jaw that sent him flying backward onto the canvas. Ortiz, 21, also beat the count, but seemed more hurt than Esalas had been moments before, and was forced to eat a few more solid rights before the round ended.

Esalas' big chance had passed and he never threatened again. Ortiz decked him a third time in the fourth with a roundhouse left, and even though Esalas, 34, survived the round, Ortiz put him down for the full count with another left in the fifth, ending matters at the 2:31 mark.

"He hits so hard and he's so fast," said Esalas, 31-13 (25). "He has a great future."

"I showed heart to get up from a knockdown and knock him out," said Ortiz, 21-1-1 (16). "I was a little embarrassed he dropped me in front of my people. He caught me cold. I was a bit stale because I hadn't fought in six months, but I enjoyed it."

(5-3-08)
Nigel Collins

Sebastian Sylvester KO 12 Javier Castillejo

Neubrandenburg, Germany: A first-round knockout defeat by obscure Russian welterweight Yury Zaytsev in his professional debut in 2002 has failed to prevent Sylvester, 159½, Greifswald, Germany, from building a solid career in his native country. With another impressive performance at Jahnsportforum, punctuated by a pulverizing knockout of two-division former titleholder Castillejo, 159, Madrid, Spain, the 27-year-old German confirmed his mandatory challenger status for the WBA middleweight title, which is held by another German, Felix Sturm, who lost and regained the belt against Castillejo recently.

Now 40 years old, Castillejo's best days are behind him. He dropped a lopsided decision against Oscar De La Hoya in 2001 to lose his junior middleweight belt and Fernando Vargas also beat him handily in 2005, but he has always been tough and durable. He started well against Sylvester, too, forcing the action and firing strong punches, which compelled the sometimes-cautious Sylvester to stand his ground more and fight. In the second round, their heads came together accidentally and Sylvester emerged with a horrible cut in a bad spot just above his right eye. Some good emergency work in the corner was required to prevent it from becoming a more serious problem, though further headbutts in subsequent rounds opened more cuts in that area.

Castillejo, 62-8 (43), remained competitive through

PHOTO BY MIGUEL RIOPA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Narvaez (right) tallies easy defense against Pozo

five rounds. He might even have had the edge. But the fight turned inexorably in the sixth when Sylvester hurt him with an array of hard shots and the overwhelmed Spaniard could barely survive the round. The German continued to jab effectively over the next several rounds, throwing debilitating combinations at regular intervals to extend his lead. Only the damage around his right eye, which included swelling just beneath it, posed any threat to his ultimate success.

But he came out in the 12th round determined to produce a grandstand climax and, as the Spaniard moved in close to try to unload, he nailed him with a solid jab and an explosive right hand to the chin that turned Castillejo's head violently and propelled him to the canvas flat on his back. The Spaniard remained in this position for several anxious minutes after referee Erkki Meronen (Finland) stopped the bout at the 1:53 mark before he finally got up and was able to walk away from the ring unaided.

"It was a great finishing punch, and I wanted to end the fight in style for all of the fans here," said Sylvester, 29-2 (14). "I am looking forward to my chance against Felix Sturm and I've proved that I'm ready for a title shot by beating a world-class opponent."

Promoter: **Wilfried Sauerland**

(4-12-08)

Brian Doogan

Omar Narvaez KO 8 Ivan Pozo

Vigo, Spain: Depending on which way you look at it, Narvaez has either had an exceptional reign as WBO flyweight titlist or an extremely lackluster one. On the plus side, with his win over Pozo, 112, Vigo, Spain, at Pabellon Central in the challenger's hometown, Narvaez extended his streak to 13 successful defenses and, for the fifth time, retained the belt in his opponent's homeland. On the minus side, much of the opposition has been woefully unqualified to fight for a title, and Pozo certainly fits that description.

According to BoxRec.com, Pozo's last four opponents had a combined record of 1-41—yes, three of them were winless and the fourth had a 1-29 ledger. That's not exactly the ideal way to prepare for your first title shot.

As expected, Narvaez, 112, Cordoba, Argentina, dominated the fight. The first round was competitive, but the 32-year-old southpaw beltholder took control in the second and gradually wore down Pozo, 28, with one second ticking off the clock in round eight before Pozo's corner decided not to let him out.

With the loss, the Spaniard fell to 28-5-1 (18). Meanwhile, Narvaez, 27-0-2 (17), is now one defense shy of equaling the record of 14 defenses by an Argentine fighter, set by middleweight champ Carlos Monzon in the 1970s. The big difference, however, is that Monzon was recognized as the legitimate, lineal champ and fought most of the best contenders of his day, whereas "El Huracan" continues padding his record with the Pozos of the world.

(5-9-08)

Firat Arslan W 12 Darnell Wilson

Stuttgart, Germany: It appeared on paper to be a routine defense of the WBA cruiserweight title for Arslan, 199½, Rottweil, Germany, and so it turned out. Despite dangerous punching power, Wilson, 199½, Takoma Park, Maryland, possessed nothing else to throw the 37-year-old German southpaw out of his stride and Arslan secured a straightforward unanimous points decision at Hanns-Martin-Schleyer-Halle in his first fight since winning the WBA title against Virgil Hill last year.

Confused about the number of WBA cruiserweight belts up for grabs these days? Do not worry, for you are in a big boat. David Haye, the world cruiserweight champion, is set to move up to up to heavyweight and therefore he will give up the WBA belt that he also won in his bout against Jean-Marc Mormeck last November. Presumably, that belt will disappear into the abyss, but who knows? Boxing's lack of a centralized authority lends itself to the abuses that have long clouded the title picture in every division

PHOTO BY OLIVER LANG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Arslan was simply too good for Wilson

and were made noticeably worse when the WBA began with its "super champion" shenanigans.

Fighters fight, of course, so Arslan, 29-3-1 (18), was merely doing his job, which he did well enough without looking spectacular. Remarkably, he is a self-taught boxer who did not even have a trainer or manager until his last half-dozen or so contests. How much more improvement he can make at the age of 37 is uncertain, but he has already developed into a solid, world-class competitor.

"The Ding-A-Ling Man" was hurt early, a left hook to the jaw sending him into the ropes in the second round, and he could never put together the punches needed to discourage Arslan. "I came in feeling confident tonight and I fought my heart out, but he was just better," said Wilson, 33.

Arslan controlled the bout with his boxing skills, though Wilson managed to mount a rally of sorts in round seven when he stepped up the pace and drove the German back with a sequence of good shots. But he was unable to sustain his effort, and Arslan regained the initiative quickly before he closed out the final three rounds by nailing Wilson with a number of jarring punches, including a hard left to the head in the 10th. "I was worried about a lucky punch until the last round because he hit hard," Arslan said. "I wanted to pressure him so that he couldn't use his power."

Erkki Meronen (Finland), Ove Ovesen (Denmark), and Pierluigi Poppi (Italy) all scored for Arslan by 117-111, the same as THE RING. The referee was Paul Thomas (England).

Promoter: **Universum-Box**

(5-3-08)

Brian Doogan

Adrian Diaconu W 12 Chris Henry

Bucharest, Romania: Despite conceding three inches in height to his six-foot-tall opponent, Diaconu, 174¼, Montreal, Quebec, via Ploesti-Prahova, Romania, had the better of some exciting exchanges to earn a unanimous points decision against Henry, 173¾, Houston, Texas, at the Sala Polivalenta.

With Chad Dawson, the WBC light heavyweight titleholder, apparently on the verge of signing to fight former world light heavyweight champion Antonio Tarver, the new IBF titleholder, this bout was for the WBC "interim" title. Depending on all of the machinations, Diaconu could face Glen Johnson for the WBC title in the fall.

Emphasizing his determination to succeed in this step-up bout, Henry hired Ronnie Shields to train him, but the unbeaten Diaconu's physical strength and ability to work hard inside overcame the strategy that they formulated. The Montreal-based Canadian has not encountered any of the top light heavyweights—American Rico Hoye is the most instantly recognizable name on his record—but he looks as if he might be capable of giving any of them a fight.

Henry, 27, tried to utilize his advantage in height in the opening round, boxing behind a snappy left jab. But Diaconu, 29, was determined to work his way in close, and a solid right hand sent Henry into the ropes. Diaconu landed a left hook after the bell, but Henry kept his cool and continued to box behind his jab in round two. Some swelling appeared beneath Diaconu's right eye, but he enjoyed some success himself with a left hook and a right hand to the jaw that got Henry's attention.

From the third round on, Diaconu, 25-0 (15), did a better job of evading Henry's jab and he became a more elusive target all around by switching from orthodox to southpaw and seamlessly switching back again. He hurt Henry with a powerful right hand to the head and a followup left hook, and the American was stung into some vicious exchanges in the fourth. The bout was being fought on Diaconu's terms, and at the end of four rounds, the scorecards showing that he was ahead by 40-36 on one card and by 39-37 on the other two were announced in accordance with WBC rules.

Naturally, Henry responded in the fifth and he fired in

several good combinations punctuated by a solid right uppercut and left hook to Diaconu's jaw. More right hands followed, and they continued to exchange hard shots in the sixth, with Diaconu landing a left hook that prompted a series of exciting flurries by both men along the ropes.

Henry, 21-1 (17), shook Diaconu with a right uppercut and overhand right in round seven, but Diaconu recovered quickly and countered effectively in the eighth, with his right hand particularly potent. He also landed a couple of tasty bodypunches, and a right and left to the jaw rocked Henry, who staggered near the end of the round as he was pushed back into his corner. Diaconu went downstairs with his left hook before he brought it up to the head and he fired two right hands after the bell as Canadian referee Michael Griffin tried to intervene. Diaconu was still ahead when the open scoring was announced, with two judges seeing it 78-74 and the third 77-75.

PHOTO BY NORBERT MILLAUER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Erdie celebrates win over no-hoper Abron

The exchanges continued to be hard-fought over the final four rounds, but Diaconu fought at least on even terms and at the final bell he was a worthy winner. Mark Green (England) had him ahead by 116-113, while Viktor Panin (Russia) and Oren Schellenberger (USA) both saw it 115-113. THE RING also scored 115-113 for Diaconu.

The bout was available for viewing in the U.S. via www.donkingtv.com, the second such web experiment offered by Don King Productions.

(4-19-08)
Brian Doogan

Zsolt Erdei W 12 DeAndrey Abron

Dresden, Germany: Quite what Abron, 173, Youngstown, Ohio, had done to merit a shot at Erdei, 173¼, Hamburg, Germany, via Budapest, Hungary, the longtime WBO light heavyweight titleholder, is anyone's guess. In his previous bout, over eight rounds, Abron outpointed Thomas Reid from Jackson, Tennessee, whose record was 35-20-1 (13). Abron had beaten an undefeated fighter in his bout before that, a 12-rounder against Shane Benfield from York, South Carolina, but "The Irish Hitman" was stopped by Peter Manfredo Jr. in the sixth round in his next encounter, so his record belied his limitations.

As recently as November 2006, Abron, 15-2 (10), had boxed Eric "Hollywood" Starr from Hillsborough, North Carolina, whose record was 14-29-3 (4). Incredibly, this was a rematch. Yet Abron was deemed to be worthy of challenging Erdei, whose claims to any form of light heavyweight superiority diminish with each successive unqualified contender he faces. The patrons at the Freiberger Arena did not appear to care either way, for they applauded politely at regular intervals and acclaimed Erdei's 10th title defense at the finish.

"I saved my energy and I really didn't risk much," Erdei, 33, said correctly. "I have a feeling bigger fights are still to come."

But the boxing world at large is not holding its breath. Nor would there have been much chance of becoming breathless through these 12 rounds of tedious and one-sided action. The jab was both boxers' weapon of choice and they offered up little more out of their arsenals. Erdei was able to control the fight almost all the way, though several right hands to the Hungarian's head in the final minute of the third gave the American the round on all three judges' scorecards.

Each subsequent round mirrored the one before until, unexpectedly, a fight broke out in the final round when Erdei landed a left-right combination that shook the 35-year-old Abron and the titlist followed up with a succession of hard blows. Abron was made to retaliate and he landed a couple of right hand counters before the bell intervened to end the drama.

Manfred Kuechler (Germany), Jose H. Rivera (Puerto Rico), and Clark Sammartino (USA) all scored 119-109 for Erdei, the same as THE RING. The referee was Roberto Ramirez (Puerto Rico).

Erdei, 29-0 (17), has occasionally appeared capable of proving a match for the top boxers in the division. It

is time that he did, rather than continuing to face inferior opposition.

Promoter: **Wilfried Sauerland**
(4-26-08)
Brian Doogan

Joel Julio W 10 Ishe Smith

Vancouver, British Columbia: Colombian bomber Julio moved closer to a shot at a junior middleweight belt with his sixth straight win, but former prospect Smith proved to be a tough test in an entertaining scrap at the River Rock Casino.

Julio, 33-1 (30), never had his strong-chinned opponent in serious trouble, but his ability to carry the early rounds with a brisker pace proved to be the difference in a close fight. For Smith, 19-3 (9), it was his third narrow points loss in his last seven fights. The Las Vegas native dropped a split decision to Sergio Mora on the first season of *The Contender* and was outpointed over 10 rounds by Sechew Powell in February 2007.

Still, he allowed Julio to dictate the pace during the first half of the fight. The 23-year-old was busier and pressed the action, while Smith, 29, was content to rely on his jab and slick defensive skills to set up counters. According to CompuBox, the more aggressive Julio landed 196 of his 788 shots (25 percent) on the night, while Smith connected on 138 of 593 punches (23 percent).

Julio, 154, came out firing bombs at Smith, 154¾, who appeared a bit stiff in the opening minutes. Smith woke up and landed a few counters, but Julio took the round with his aggression and bodywork. The next four rounds were similar, with Smith landing the cleaner shots, just not enough of them to keep the forward-moving Julio from winning the rounds with his relentless pace.

Gradually getting busier, Smith enjoyed a strong sixth as Julio began to back up and try to cruise a bit behind his slightly longer jab. By the seventh, the roles of the early rounds had fully reversed, with Julio moving backward and countering, and Smith, who landed a pair of solid rights late in the round, becoming the aggressor.

Smith clearly won the seventh and eighth as he mixed up his punches well. He scored with counters, clean rights off the jab, and an array of bodyshots, while Julio struggled to land anything of significance. Julio seemed revived in the 10th, but Smith countered well throughout the round.

Judges Barry Druxman (USA) and Joel Scobie (USA) each had it 96-94, while Duane Ford (USA) scored it 97-93, all for Julio. THE RING agreed with Druxman and Scobie's final tallies. The referee was Joe Cortez (USA).

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **West Coast Promotions**
(4-30-08)

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The doctor comes to Vilches' aid

Juan Urango KO 4 Carlos Vilches

Hollywood, Florida: In a match between a pair of Ricky Hatton victims, southpaw Urango elevated his status with a spectacular, one-punch kayo of Vilches at the Hard Rock Casino.

There was a hint of what was to come in the first round, when the 27-year-old Urango, 139½, delivered a right hand that sent Vilches, 139¼, flopping into the ropes. Referee Tommy Kimmons (USA) ruled that the ropes held Vilches up and issued a count.

Vilches, Santa Rosa, Argentina, did his best over the next two rounds to stay out of trouble, sliding away from his assailant along the ropes and countering whenever he had the opportunity. But he simply didn't have the punch to keep the hard-charging Urango away indefinitely.

In the fourth, Urango backed Vilches, 31, into the ropes and unloaded a wicked right that landed flush on his foe's jaw and sent him crashing to the floor. Vilches was obviously so out of it, Kimmons stopped halfway into his count so that the stricken fighter could get immediate medical attention. Official time of the knockout was 1:45.

Although he remained down for several minutes, Vilches, who came into the bout riding a 10-fight winning streak, seemed clear-headed upon regaining his feet. His record now stands at 53-8-2 (31).

Urango, 20-1-1 (16), has now tallied three consecutive knockouts since losing a hard-fought decision to Hatton in January 2007, a fight in which the Miami-based Colombian also lost the IBF junior welterweight title.

Promoter: **Seminole Warriors Boxing**
Television: **ESPN2**
(4-23-08)

Cassius Baloyi W 12 Mzonke Fana

Mafikeng, South Africa: Some had the ignorance/gall to call this the start of Baloyi's sixth "world" title reign, but since two were of the WBU variety and two involved IBO belts, that claim is laughable. Even the IBF reigns are dubious, since the belt belonged to Marco Antonio Barrera until he was shamelessly stripped in 2006. So it could certainly be argued that Baloyi remains a zero-time world champion, but "Mr. Shy Guy" did kick off his second IBF junior lightweight title reign with a majority decision win over Fana at the North-West University Sports Complex.

Fana, 128½, Cape Town, South Africa, got off to a terribly slow start in his second title defense, doing virtually nothing for the first four rounds. Maybe he was allowing Baloyi, 128¾, Johannesburg, South Africa, to tire himself out, or maybe he was just being too patient in looking for a counterpunching opportunity, but either way, he allowed the challenger to race to a comfortable points lead.

Fana, 34, started to apply pressure in the fifth and sixth, and in the eighth, Baloyi, 33, was showing signs of slowing down. However, Baloyi enjoyed a fortuitous development that round, as Fana had a badly torn glove and referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) had to stop the fight for about three minutes while the glove was replaced. In that time, Baloyi got his energy back, and he landed several flush shots on Fana, 27-4 (10), to close out and steal the round.

Nevertheless, Baloyi's early lead was almost gone by the time the final two rounds arrived, and the fighters slugged it out toward the finish line. It was Baloyi who won the second half of the final round, though, giving the clear impression that he'd done enough to win. Two of the judges agreed: Mickey Vann (England) had it 116-112 and Alex Levin (USA) scored it 117-111. The 114-114 scorecard of Ingo Barrabas (Germany) meant that Baloyi, 35-3-1 (18), had to settle for a majority decision.

"I said Baloyi would beat Fana anytime and I was right," declared the new titlist's trainer, Nick Durandt, after the cards were read.

Baloyi is expected to defend the belt in September, though no opponent had been named as of press time.

Promoter: **Branco Sports Productions**

(4-12-08)

Vicente Escobedo W 10 Roberto Arrieta

Carson, California: Often compared to his promoter, Oscar De La Hoya, lightweight prospect Escobedo had a chance to impress on the eve of De La Hoya's highly anticipated comeback fight with Steve Forbes at The Home Depot Center. But in front of a crowd of just 1,108 at the center's tennis arena, Escobedo appeared more methodical than golden in outpointing the game Argentinean Arrieta.

A 2004 U.S. Olympian, Escobedo survived some vicious bodyshots in the early going, then jabbed his way to a comfortable points win. It was the eighth straight victory for Escobedo, 17-1 (11), since an upset loss to Daniel Jimenez in April of 2006. "He's a great prospect," Arrieta told the *Los Angeles Daily News*. "He needs to work on more details. But he's good, he's very good."

Arrieta, 27-13-4 (10), absorbed Escobedo's crisp combos, hard left hooks and steady jabs in the early rounds. Arrieta hurt the 26-year-old with a left hook to the body in the second, then had him backpedaling after landing a series of punishing hooks downstairs in the fifth.

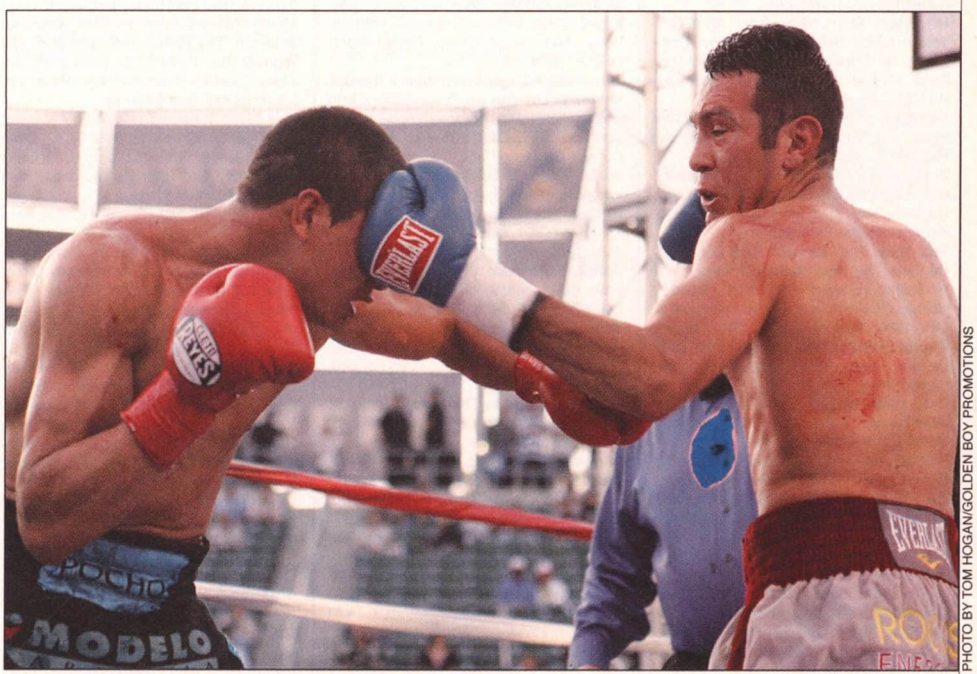
Escobedo, 133½, responded in the sixth with a punishing right cross off the jab. Badly hurt, the 32-year-old Arrieta, 131, pulled Escobedo to the floor with him as he fell. He beat the count of referee Dr. Lou Moret (USA), and then stayed in close the rest of the way, while Escobedo cruised behind his jab and bodywork.

The smaller Arrieta had won five straight coming into the fight, and he'd only been stopped twice in his career. Escobedo went the distance for the fifth straight time. "He held me so much I couldn't finish him," he told the *Los Angeles Times*. "[But] he took a lot of punishment."

Judges Alejandro Rochin (Mexico) and Fritz Werner (USA) both scored it 99-90, while Lou Filippo (USA) had it 97-92, all for Escobedo. THE RING scored it 98-91 for the Woodland, California, native.

Television: **Telefutura**

Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions** ■



Arrieta runs into Escobedo's potent left

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

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 (Continued from Page 26)

were taunted by government officials because of his decision to defect.

Finally, lawyers Tony Gonzalez of Miami and Pamela Faulk of New York were able to get work visas for the boxers. Gonzalez then helped Barthelemy strike a three-year, $1-million deal with Germany-based promoters Arena Box Promotions and First Artist.

"Never in my life had I even dreamed of a million dollars," he said.

Barthelemy made his pro debut on February 27, 2007, earning a four-round decision over Ravil Mukhamadiarov, in Hamburg, Germany. He followed that with a June 16 decision over Gennadiy Delisandru, in Ankara, Turkey. On October 30, Barthelemy made his U.S. debut, earning a decision over Kevin Hudgins, in Hollywood, Florida.

After living in Germany for the first six months of his career, Barthelemy's next three fights were all in Florida, and each produced six-round decisions. And while his start has been impressive, some are questioning his inability—as of yet—to score a knockout as a pro.

But Roberto Quesada, who has been a trainer for 32 years, 16 in Cuba and the past 16 in the U.S., has no doubts.

"In his past two fights, Yan has three knockdowns," said Quesada. "I didn't think they would get up, but they did. But remember, they are veterans, and they know that if they get knocked out, they face two months without fighting."

Barthelemy's most recent opponent, Jose Garcia Bernal, represented a step up in class. While his first five opponents combined for a record of 35-50, Bernal entered the April 12 bout with a mark of 27-10 (18).

"There are a lot of critics," Barthelemy said. "But my opponents have felt the power of my punches. I hit people. If they fall, good. If not, I will win by points."

Barthelemy said that when he gets to fight 10- or 12-round bouts, his knockouts will come in bunches.

"They will fall," he insisted. "But I've always had it in my head that boxing is an art, hit and not get hit. God blessed me with the ability to not get hit."

Miami-based boxing historian Rick Encinosa, who has also been a referee, manager, writer, and matchmaker in the fight game, is high on Barthelemy's potential, especially when compared to his more-publicized ex-teammate.

"Gamboa is getting bigger headlines because he has knockout power," Encinosa said. "But people may not know that Barthelemy beat Gamboa six times out of seven in Cuba. Barthelemy is very motivated."

Encinosa said the flaw of most Cuban fighters is that they have trained so long in the amateur system that they need to make the adjustment to the pro game. In Olympic boxing, fighters are taught to stay outside and score points with the jab. No extra points are awarded for powerpunches inside.

"Most Cuban fighters can't fight inside because they haven't been taught," Encinosa said. "Olympic boxing is like fencing, pitty-patty. But once Yan makes the adjustment, I think he will pick guys apart and wear them down."

Barthelemy said his heroes growing up were Cuban champions Teofilo Stevenson and Felix Savon, who, along with Hungary's Lazlo Papp, are the only fighters to win three Olympic boxing golds.

But Barthelemy also had another idol—American Pernell Whitaker, a former Olympic gold medalist and a professional titleholder in four weight classes.

"He was a lefty like me," Barthelemy said. "He had a similar style."

When asked if he could have won three gold medals had he stayed in Cuba, Barthelemy had an interesting reply.

"Three? Maybe, no," he said. "But two? Yes, for sure."

Instead of Olympic gold, however, Barthelemy has his eyes on a world championship in the pro ranks, Quesada, who trained former world champion Edwin "El Chapo" Rosario, wants to help his countryman reach the top.

"This opportunity to train Yan came directly to me," he said. "And I am not going to waste it. I am going to make him a champion."

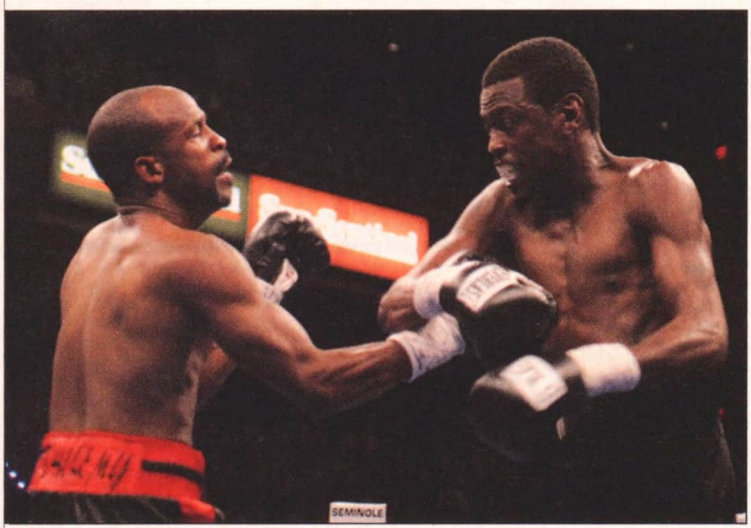
Encinosa thinks it's possible.

"I think he can have a long career," Encinosa said. "I am not a guy to tell you for sure a guy will be a champion, because it depends on a lot of factors. Boxing is full of guys who should have been champions but weren't.

"But I will say this: Yan will be in the upper echelon of the division within a year-and-a-half."

Barthelemy wants more than a long career. He wants to be a champion. He wants to touch the sky again.

"Of course I can be a champion," he said. "I am here for that reason. I believe the opportunity will present itself, and when it does, I will know what to do." ■



Barthelemy rips a right into the body of Kevin Hudgins, en route to a four-round decision in October 2007, in Hollywood, Florida. Through his first six pro fights, Barthelemy had yet to score a stoppage victory.

Walter Villa is a Miami, Florida-based freelance writer.

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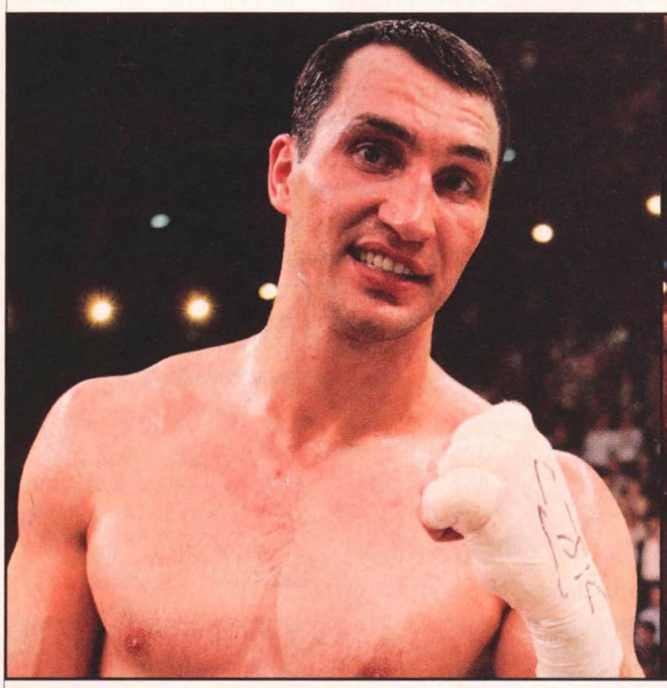
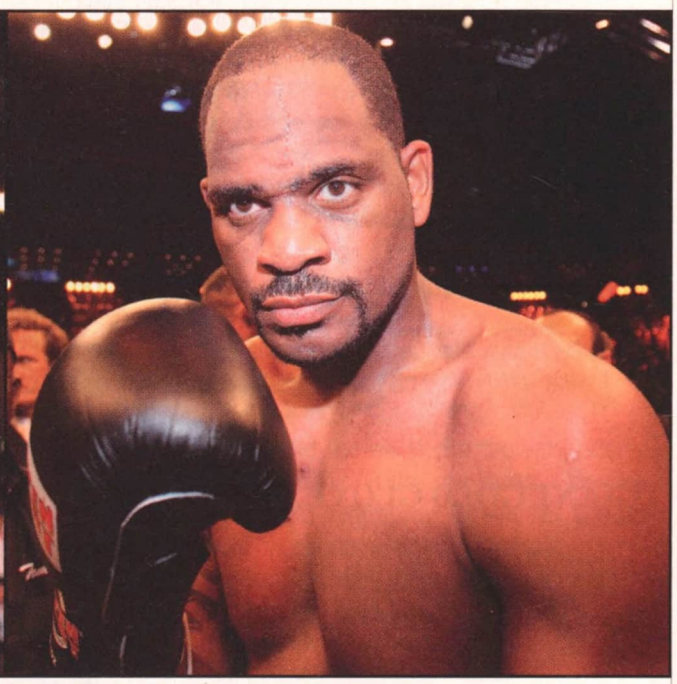




Wladimir Klitschko could use a little pick-me-up after taking a beating from the fans at New York's Madison Square Garden while doing as little as possible to defeat Sultan Ibragimov last February. In Tony Thompson, he may have picked the right opponent to get away with another relatively easy victory, but the wrong one if he wants to score higher in opinion polls.

In fact, you might want to call Thompson "Ibragimov Heavy." While he weighs 30 more pounds and stands four inches taller than Klitschko's last challenger, there are similarities. Both Ibragimov and Thompson are southpaws, and neither has the kind of firepower that could force Klitschko to come out of his shell.

Thompson is not a puncher, so it's hard to say that he even has a "puncher's chance" of winning the IBF title, but there is one glaring fact that is indisputable: "Tony The Tiger" will not have lost a fight in seven years when he steps through the ropes to battle Klitschko on July 12 at the Color Line Arena in Hamburg, Germany.

Klitschko has suffered two defeats since 2000, terrible knockouts to Corrie Sanders (KO 2, March 2003) and Lamon Brewster (KO 5, April 2004). Maybe it's those two stinging defeats that have made the current face of the heavyweight division a tentative, jabbing, safety-first fighter. In some respects, Thompson's size could pose some problems; he's almost as tall as Klitschko, and he actually has a half-inch reach advantage.

The bottom line, though, is that fans want excitement from their heavyweights, so beating Thompson won't be enough. If Klitschko wants to get back into the good graces of the fans, he has to do more.

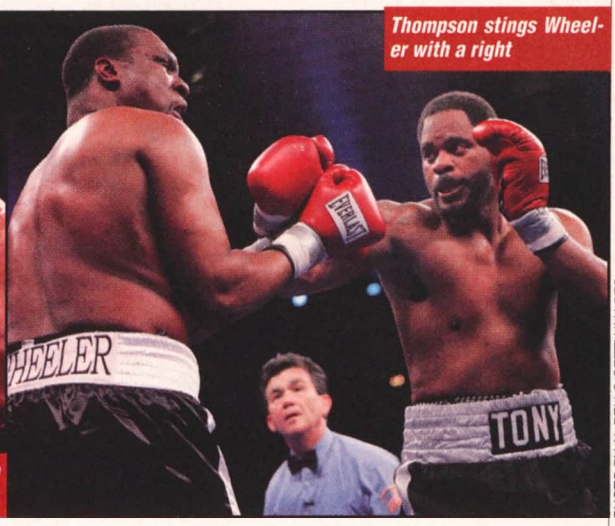
Wladimir Klitschko

Tony Thompson

Record and World Rating

Klitschko lands a left on Byrd's face

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES



Thompson stings Wheeler with a right

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Is 50-3 with 44 knockouts ... Had stunning amateur career with a 134-6 record, punctuated with a super heavyweight gold medal victory for Ukraine at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta ... Turned pro in November 1996 ... Went undefeated in first 24 fights before suffering knockout loss in 1998 ... A 16-fight win streak was spoiled before by two more kayo losses, one each in 2003 and 2004 ... Won IBF heavyweight in April '06 and has made four defenses ... Ranked number one at heavyweight by THE RING.

Is 31-1 with 19 knockouts ... Started pro career late, inspired by local pro he met at a health club ... Brief amateur career ended at 12-2 ... Won first four as pro before suffering first and only loss via four-round decision, in July 2000 ... Didn't score first stoppage until sixth pro bout ... Has an eight-year, 27-fight win streak, built mostly against tepid opposition at best ... Not afraid to fight abroad ... Faced first top-20 contender in '07 ... Ranked number nine at heavyweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment

Klitschko stuns Brewster with a right to the head

PHOTO BY PATRICK STOLLARZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Thompson waffles Krasniqi with a left to the face

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Is 32 years old ... Stands 6'6?" with an 81-inch reach ... Normally fights between 241 and 246 pounds, but came in at 238 for last bout ... Possesses knockout power in either hand and is unusually light on his feet for someone his size ... Average hand speed ... At or perhaps just beyond peak of physical prime ... Dubious chin and stamina.

Is 36 years old ... Stands 6'5" with a 81?-inch reach ... Has come in around 246-248 pounds ... Slightly better than average hand speed for a heavyweight ... Lacks knockout power ... Displays good stamina ... Usually in good shape ... Uses height and reach effectively ... Fairly mobile and can move and box when pressed ... Stable chin.

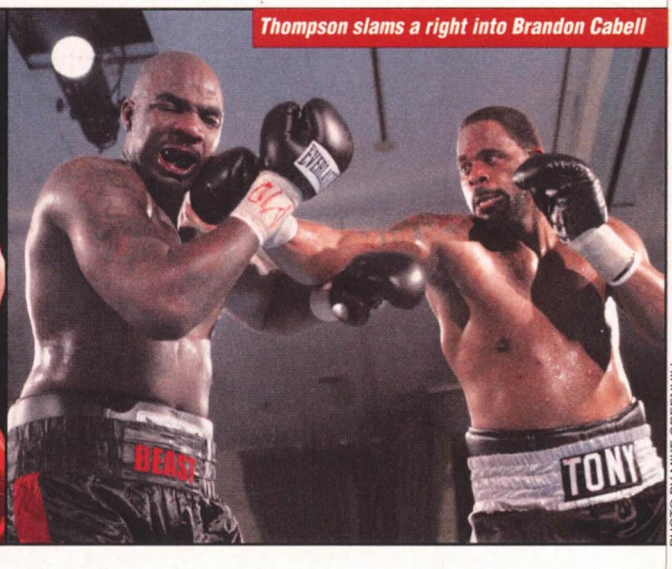
Wladimir Klitschko

Tony Thompson

Best Weapons

Peter finds Klitschko's jab difficult to avoid

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO



Thompson slams a right into Brandon Cabell

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Able to control a fight using jab alone ... Lethal right cross most dangerous weapon and capable of finishing opponent at any time ... Possesses dangerous left hook ... Uses considerable height to great advantage, keeping shorter opponents outside ... Sound technical skills.

Good, steady southpaw jab ... Straight left hand can do damage ... Throws sound combinations ... Effective using short punches inside ... Composed, relaxed approach ... Solid boxing skills ... Right hand can also be effective ... Throws proficient combinations ... Goes to the body well.

Previous Fight

Won mundane decision over awkward southpaw Sultan Ibragimov, February 23, 2008 ... Controlled the fight from start to finish, but took few risks ... Didn't throw a power-punch until third round ... Did not open up on the much-smaller Ibragimov until the eighth ... At 238, lightest he had been since 2000 . . . Easily won with unanimous 119-109, 118-110, and 117-111 verdict.

Took a chance in facing tough journeyman Cliff Couser, who was coming off the best win of his career, a second-round stoppage of Monte Barrett ... Already in line for title shot before fighting Couser on September 27, 2007 ... Connected with series of right hands that ended the fight impressively at the 1:49 mark of the second round.

Quality of Opposition

Owns victories over a quality group that includes Chris Byrd (KO 7, W 12), Samuel Peter (W 12), Calvin Brock (KO 7), Jameel McCline (KO 11), and Brewster (KO 6), avenging a previous defeat ... Suffered unexpected losses to Lamon Brewster (KO by 5), Corrie Sanders (KO by 2), and Ross Puritty (KO by 11) ... Has never been reluctant to tangle with top-10 contenders.

Has not faced anyone as accomplished as Klitschko ... Does own victories over middling contenders like Luan Krasniqi (KO 5), Timor Ibragimov (W 10), Dominick Guinn (W 12), and Vaughn Bean (W 10) ... Hasn't lost in eight years, since dropping four-round decision to Eric Kirkland in fourth fight ... Record included victories over a who's who of journeymen, including Marion Wilson (W 6), Joe Lenhart (KO 1), and Zuri Lawrence (KO 7).

Defense

Keeps opponents outside of striking range using lengthy jab ... Uses little head movement since he's become so reliant on reach ... Does not respond well when forced to fight backing up ... Has resorted recently to swatting at opponents' incoming punches ... Won't hesitate to clinch if an opponent gets too close ... Chin is a serious weakness.

High-guard defense ... Uses unorthodox style to avoid punches ... Knows how to control the pace of a fight ... Uses subtle movement to stay outside opponents' punching range ... Long jab formidable deterrent to opponents getting inside.

Wladimir Klitschko

Tony Thompson

Style

Can box or punch ... Has become so careful and methodical that he's become difficult to watch ... Grown extremely dependent on jab to break down opponents ... Patience bordering on reluctance to wade into opponents and throw powershots ... Can be a commanding offensive force—when he wants to be ... Becomes uneasy and tentative when pushed.

Klitschko and Sultan Ibragimov wrestle

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Thompson punishes Guinn with a straight right

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Combination puncher reliant on boxing skills and jab ... Relaxed southpaw ... Looks to vary combinations ... Defensive mindset ... Content to counterpunch ... High guard makes it hard for opponents to find openings.

The Questions

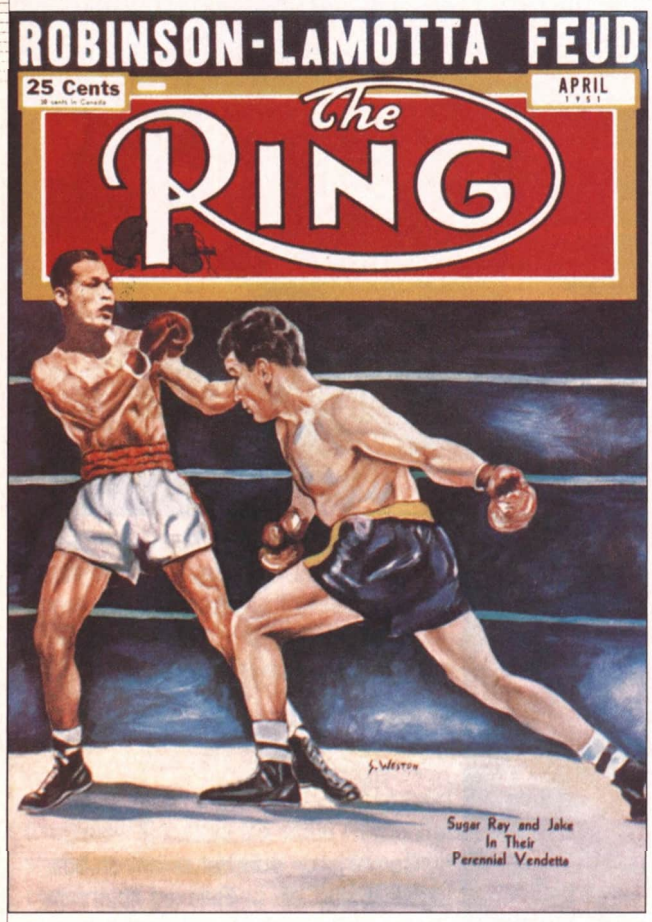
Will he get anxious and make a costly mistake if pressed by Thompson? Can he keep Thompson at the end of his jab, as he did previous opponents? How will he alter his approach if he cannot? Will he break out of safety-first mode and try to score a knockout if he gets Thompson in trouble? How will he deal with Thompson's southpaw style?

Can he withstand Klitschko's power? How will he react in the first major fight of his career? Will he freeze in his first very big fight against a world-class heavyweight? How will he deal with what figures to be a pro-Klitschko audience in Germany?

The Outcome

This could turn into a repeat of Klitschko's last fight against Sultan Ibragimov, only much more challenging to the fans watching. Klitschko will paw and start out even more cautiously, considering Thompson is much larger than Ibragimov. Thompson won't help, hanging back and waiting to counter. By the fourth or fifth round, Klitschko will start asserting himself behind the jab. Thompson, realizing the fight is slipping away, will step it up in the late rounds, but by then it will be too late. Klitschko jabs and clinches his way to another boring decision.

April 1951



COVER STORY: "Robinson-LaMotta Feud" reads the headline over top of Stanley Weston's illustration of Sugar Ray fending off the charging "Bronx Bull," a cover that was obviously created prior to the bout in which Robinson won the middleweight title via 13th-round TKO. There are, however, three pages of photos from Robinson's sixth and final fight with LaMotta and a piece by Editor Nat Fleischer titled, "Ray Robinson Stirs Up Action In Three Divisions."

Fleischer points out that not only did the 160-pound division have an exciting new champion, but there was also a handful of good welterweights waiting to battle for the welterweight title left vacant when Robinson moved up. Moreover, there was already interest in a bout between Sugar Ray and light heavyweight kingpin Joey Maxim.

As things turned out, Robinson lost, regained, and made two successful defenses of the middleweight crown before fighting Maxim in June 1951. Meanwhile, back in the 147-pound class, Kid Gavilan beat Johnny Bratton to claim the vacant title in May '51.

World Champions

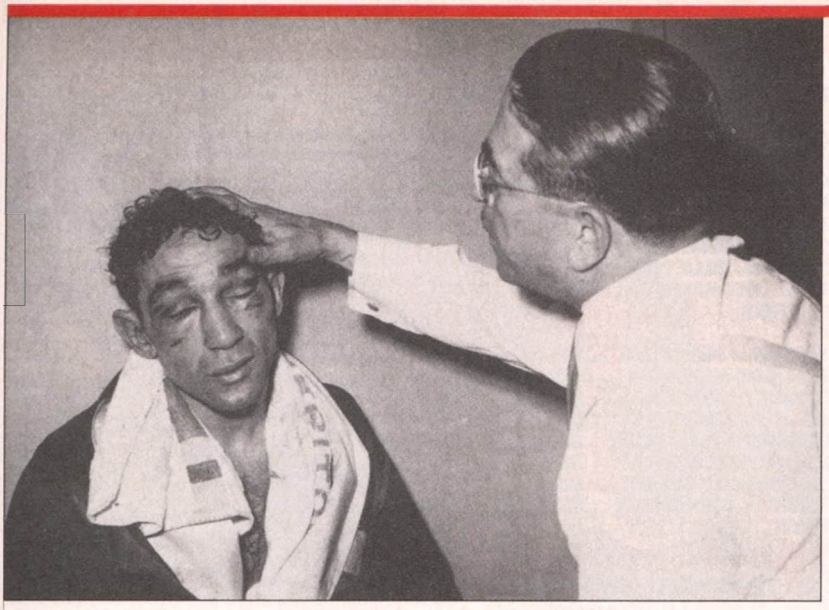
(for the period ended February 15, 1951)
Heavyweight: Ezzard Charles
Light Heavyweight: Joey Maxim
Middleweight: Ray Robinson
Welterweight: vacant
Lightweight: Ike Williams
Featherweight: Sandy Saddler
Bantamweight: Vic Toweel
Flyweight: Dado Marino

"Biggest Boxing Surprises? Here Are Nine Answers" is an awkwardly worded headline for a theme piece in which nine writers talk about "the surprise of my boxing life."

Fleischer selected Jim Corbett's title-winning bout with John L. Sullivan, Jersey Jones picked Young Corbett's kayo of Terry McGovern, while Barney Nagler went with Fritzie Zivic's defeat of Henry Armstrong. Al Buck chose Max Schmeling's upset of Joe Louis, Dan Daniel settled on Al McCoy's one-round blastout of George Chip, and Nat Loubet opted for Rex Layne's decision over Jersey Joe Walcott. Johnny Salak liked Willie Jackson's one-punch kayo of Johnny Dundee, Stanley Weston favored Bummy Davis' first-round kayo of Bob Montgomery, and Ted Carroll was convinced Dave Shade's knockout of Jimmy Slattery was "the greatest surprise in boxing history."

Ortiz fought 61 times during bantam title reign

"Fighting Champions" by Jersey Jones lauds Ezzard Charles for "carrying on where Louis left off as a busy heavyweight champion" and goes on to discuss other prodi-



Dr. Nardiello checks Willie Pep's battle wounds

gious champions throughout the decades. Former bantamweight king Manuel Ortiz is mentioned for engaging in an amazing 61 bouts during his eight-year title reign, including 19 title fights. Even more impressive was Benny Leonard, who fought 84 times during his seven-year stint as lightweight champion.

Other super-busy champs included light heavyweight Maxie Rosenbloom, middleweight Harry Greb, heavyweight Tommy Burns, lightweight Freddie Welsh, and featherweight Abe Atell.

"Dr. Nardiello Talks Boxing" by W.C. Heinz probes the mind of Dr. Vincent Nardiello, "currently the best known physician in association with the American ring." The 62-year-old Nardiello had been a ringside medico for the New York State Athletic Commission since 1931 and voiced some knowledgeable opinions.

"People get into a panic when they see a cut," he said. "They see blood and they think the fighter is in great danger of being badly hurt. I will stop a fight quicker when a fellow is getting hit badly around the head than I will because he's cut."

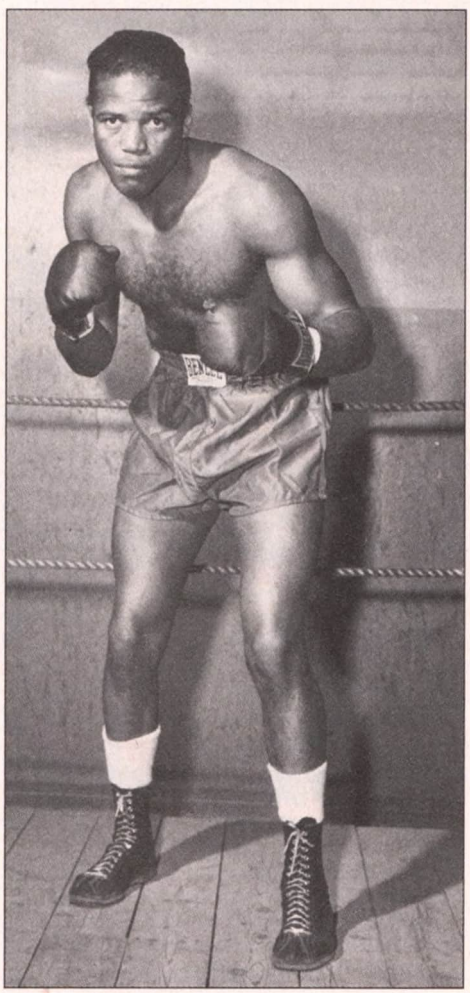
Dr. Nardiello also had quite a bit to say about making weight, including the need for boxers to move up in weight as they get older.

"A lot of fighters and the men who handle them don't realize that, through most of their careers, a fighter is still maturing. Normally, he gains about eight pounds a year. A young fighter who weighs 135 in 1950 wants to be the same in 1951, and it's going against nature. That's why I tell these kids to go up to a higher division."

"In Sunny California" local correspondent Harry Winkler details the destruction of Willie Orner's Main Street Gym in Los Angeles, which burned to the ground following 30 years as "one of the best known in the country not because of its ornate setup or equipment, but because of the many greats who have reigned there ... as many as 70 champions."

"Covering Philadelphia" by Archie Pirolli features a Herman Taylor promoted card at the Philadelphia Arena in which Percy Bassett stopped Harold Dade in the eighth round of a junior lightweight bout. On the undercard, future welterweight contender Gil Turner topped Bobby Rosado for his 15th consecutive knockout.

"German Boxing Diary" by J.A. Tree details a show in Munich that drew 8,000 fans to watch a trio of Germans take on foes imported from the United States. Only Leo Starosch emerged victorious, winning an eight-round decision over American Billy Zaduk. The other two U.S. fighters, Johnny Duke and Don Lee, fought 10-round draws with Dieter Hucks and Hans Baumann, respectively.



Turner began his career with 15 straight knockouts

"Boxing Bit From Virginia" by Jack Levinson reports that the fourth annual "March Of Dimes" boxing carnival netted $8,056 for the Polio Fund. Former light heavyweight champion Maxie Rosenbloom was the guest referee for a series of amateur bouts.

"Left Hooks From Scranton And Vicinity" by Ken Stigner reports that former heavyweight contender "Two-Ton" Tony Galento wrestled Lord Carleton at Town Hall. "The climax was sensational, with both wrestlers being counted out as they slugged, stumbled, and fell into the laps of front-row spectators," wrote Stigner. ■

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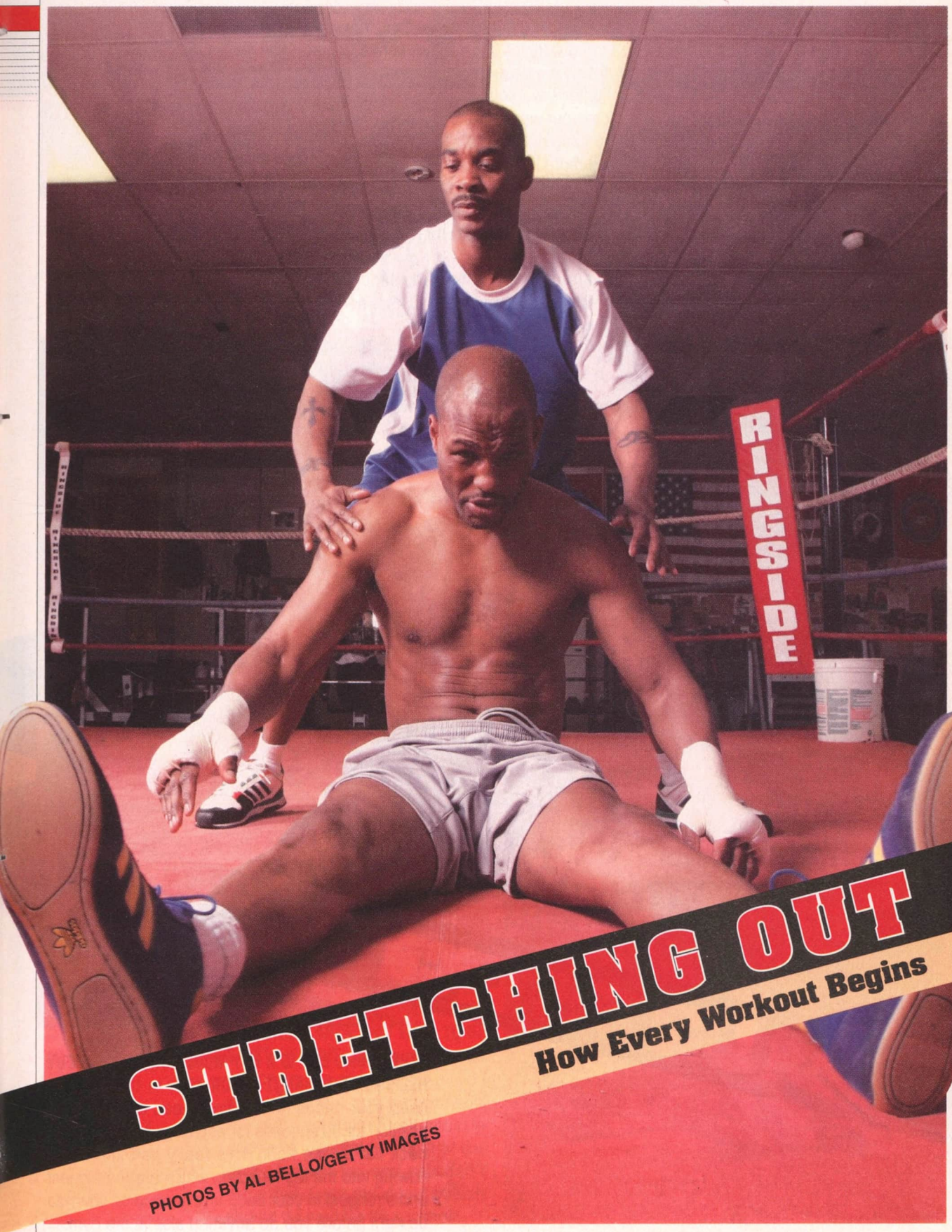
Perfect Execution

Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



STRETCHING OUT

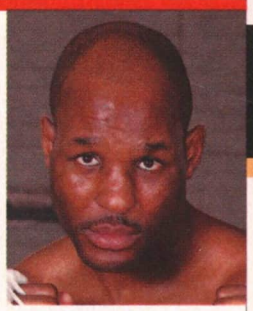
How Every Workout Begins

PHOTOS BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Walking into the gym makes you want to fight. Any fighter knows that. You walk in and see the bags and the equipment and the ring and you want to get right to work. It's in you. You want to jump up in that ring or get on the bags and get to work. But you can't. You have to resist it. Like any other workout, a fighter's workout has to start with warming up and stretching. It's not just something you do before your workout, it's *part* of the workout, as important as hitting the heavybag or sparring. If you jump right into a hard workout without stretching out your muscles first and loosening up, you're more likely to get injured.

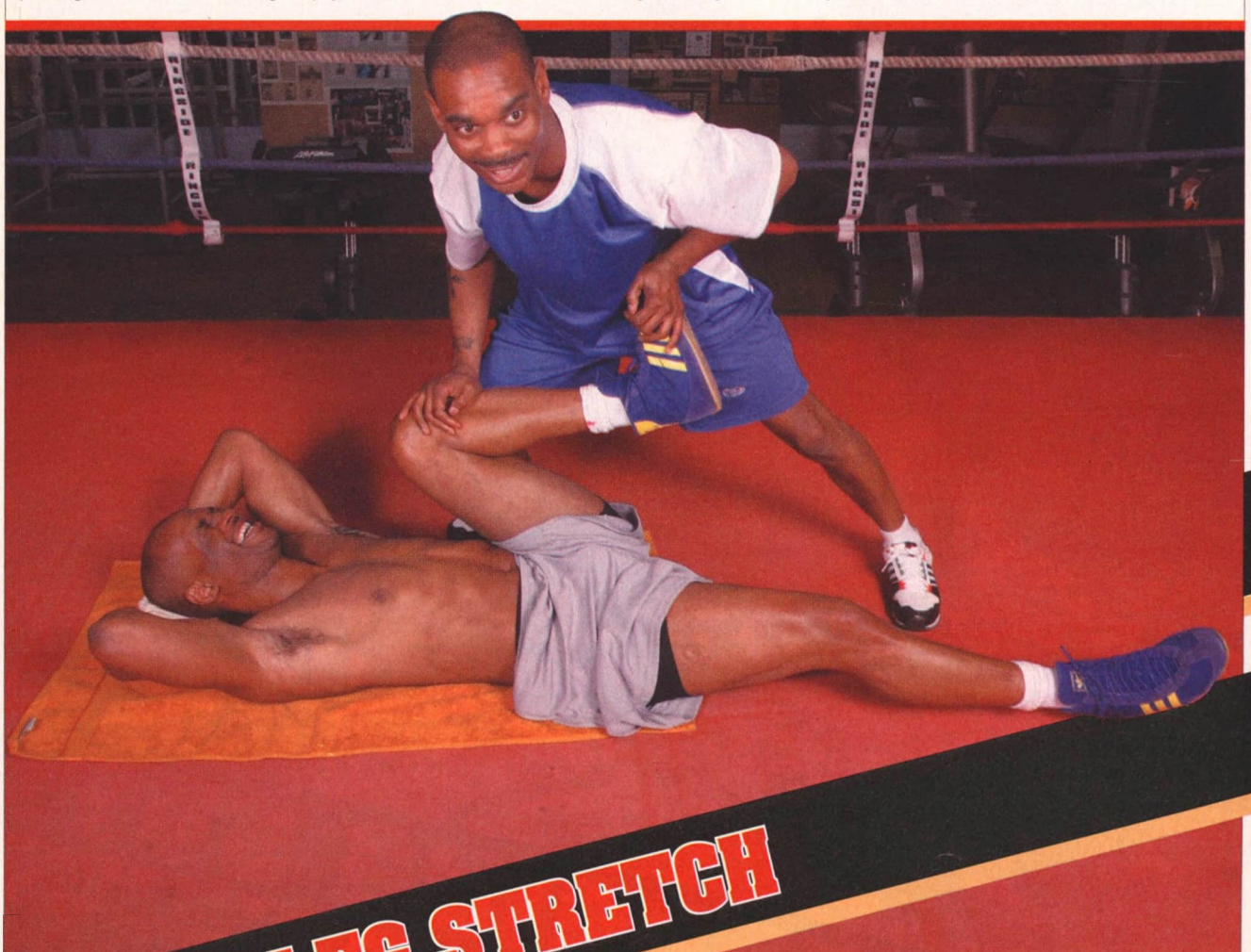
But stretching isn't just about warming up. It's about being flexible and being able to move around the ring. If you're too tight in there, you can't move as fast as you have to, can't make your body move the way it should. There's a lot of twisting and turning and pivoting in the ring, and if you're not flexible enough to do it, you're in trouble.

Stretching is most effective when you've got a gym partner to help you through it by pushing or pulling whatever muscle group you want to stretch. On this day, Danny Davis helped me out.



BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)

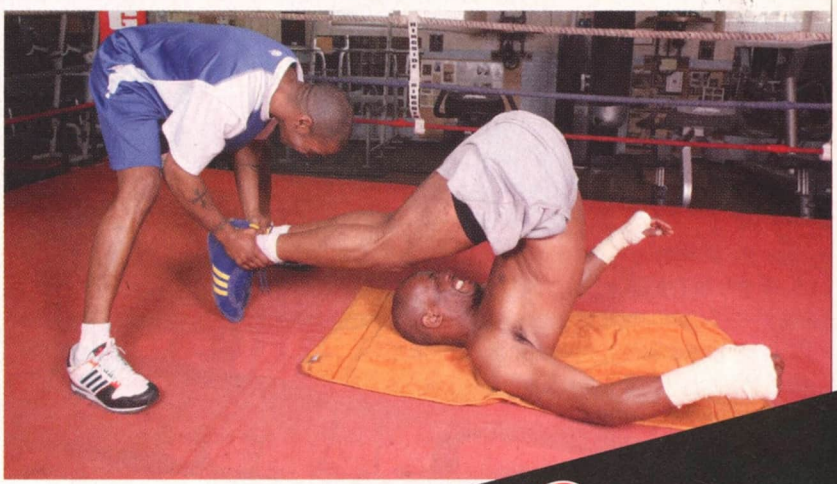


UPPER LEG STRETCH

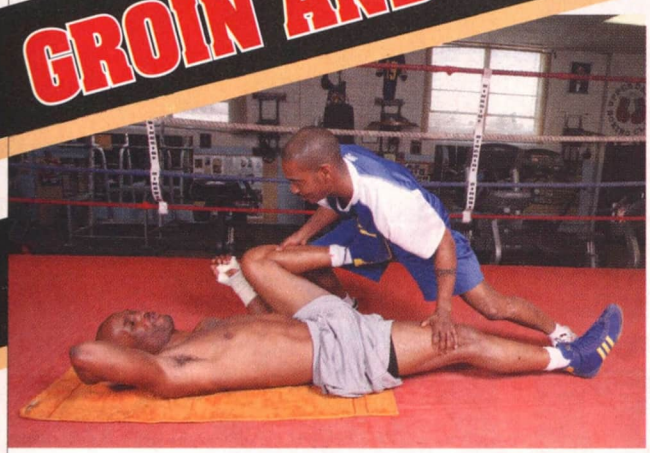
STRETCHING OUT IS A LOT MORE FUN FOR THE GUY HELPING YOU THAN IT IS FOR YOU. In this stretch, keep your hands behind your head and hold this position for 30 seconds for each leg. And keep your back flat on the floor. This really gets the blood flowing into the leg muscles, which are the biggest and strongest in your body and need to be warmed up right before you do anything else in the gym.

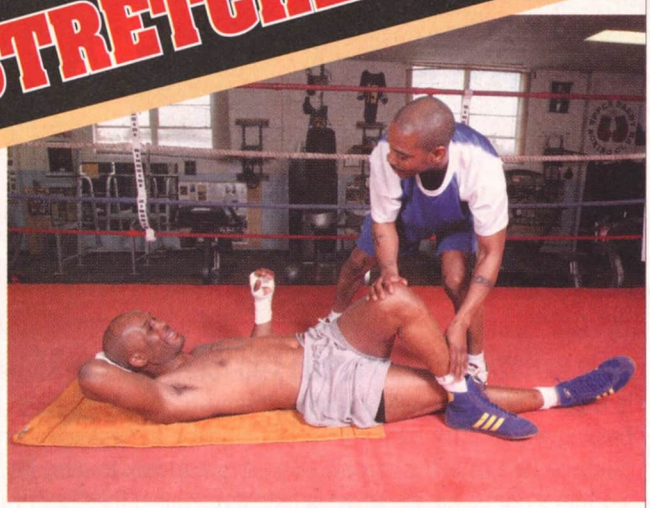
LOWER BACK AND HAMSTRING

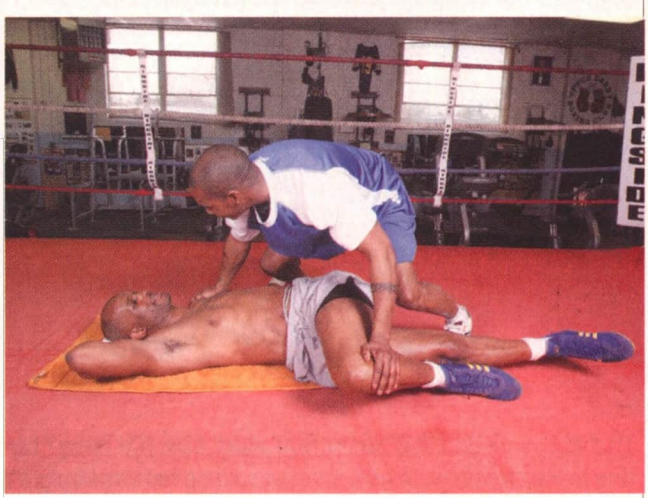
THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST PAINFUL STRETCHES YOU CAN DO, but it really gets the lower back and hamstrings loose. You need those to be stretched out because the pain you feel stretching is nothing compared to the pain you'll feel if you pull or strain a muscle in your lower back. If you've ever had your back "go out," you know what I'm talking about. If that happens you're out of commission. When you do this stretch, try to make sure your toes touch the floor like mine are in this picture, and hold it for 30 seconds.



GROIN AND HIP STRETCHES

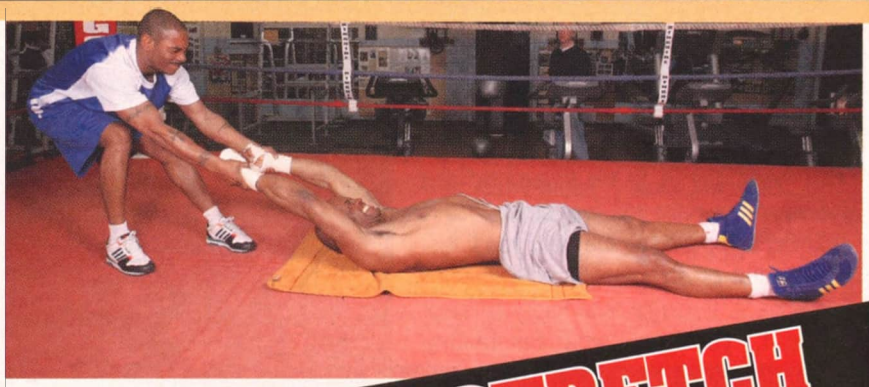






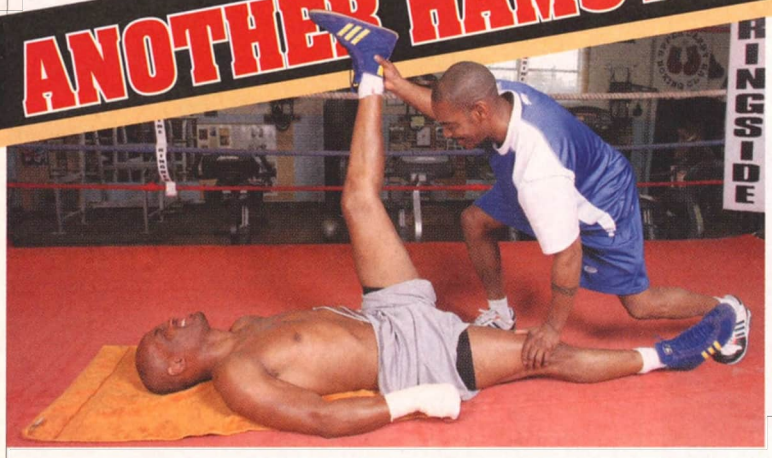
THERE ARE A WHOLE BUNCH OF MUSCLES THAT RUN THROUGH THE HIP AND GROIN AREA THAT HAVE TO BE STRETCHED OUT and warmed up so you can move around the way you should without hurting yourself. Athletes can pull a groin muscle and be off the field—or out of the ring—for weeks, and you don't want that. Each individual stretch should be held for 30 seconds.

UPPER BODY STRETCH

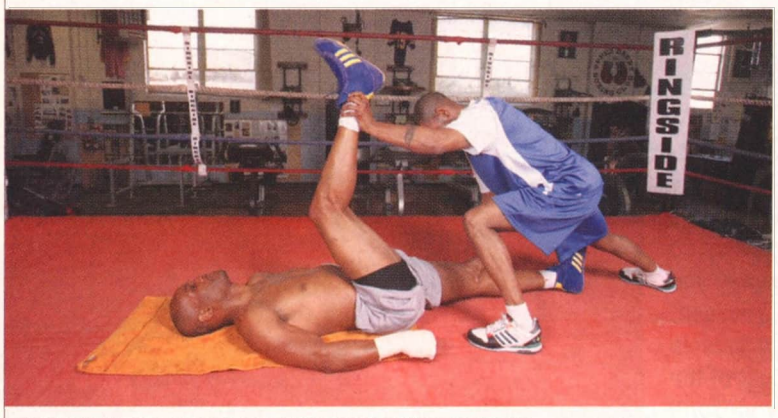


OUR UPPER BODIES NEED TO BE STRETCHED OUT AND WARMED UP AS MUCH AS OUR LOWER BODIES DO. This is a good upper body stretch that's like being on the rack. Lie flat on your back, legs straight out and arms overhead. Have your gym partner grab you by the wrists and pull. When he does, you take a deep breath in. This stretches all the muscles in the rib cage area and the shoulders and arms and even the hips. It's painful, but a good whole body stretch. Hold it for 30 seconds.

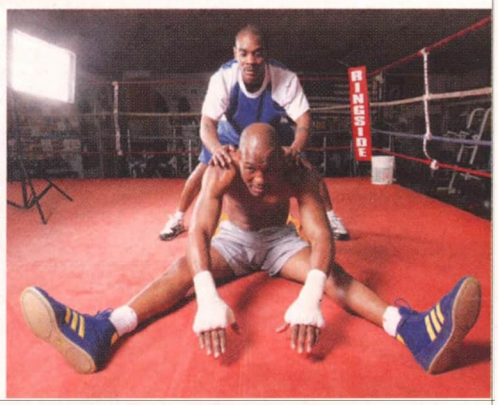
ANOTHER HAMSTRING STRETCH



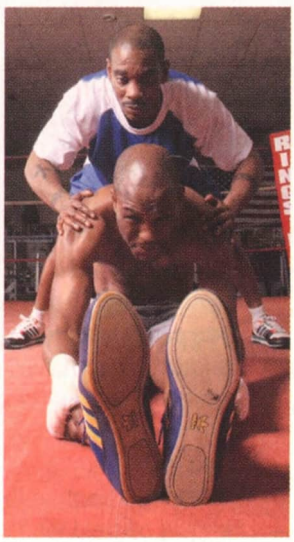
YOUR HAMSTRINGS CAN'T BE TOO STRETCHED OUT AND WARMED UP. This is a good one for really warming them up. Make sure you tell the guy helping you to push hard enough that it hurts but not so much that you're going to tear or pull a muscle. You've got to talk to him. Notice that the leg that's not being stretched is held flat against the floor or canvas.



THIS IS THE WRONG WAY TO DO THAT SAME STRETCH. Why? My right leg, the one being stretched, is bent. That should be held as straight as possible.



TWO MORE STRETCHES FOR THE GROIN, LOWER BACK, AND HAMSTRINGS. In the first, the legs are kept open to stretch the groin. In the second, the feet come together and your legs are straight and flat on the floor. Bend forward as far as you can. In both versions, the closer your head gets to your legs, the better. Hold the position for 30 seconds.



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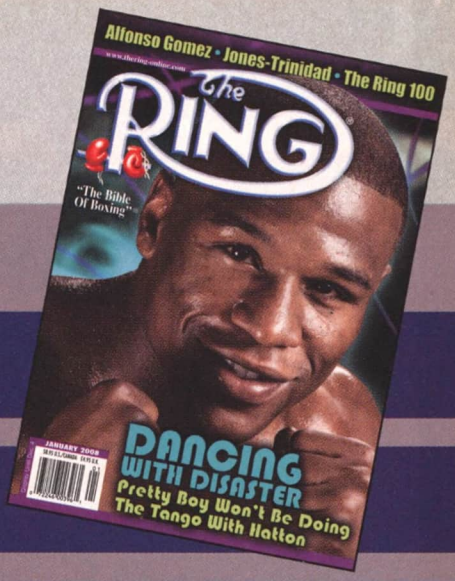

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By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

If The Glove Doesn't Fit ...

Following a number of serious brain injuries in 2006, two ending in death, the Nevada State Athletic Commission became the first regulatory body to require fighters competing at 135 pounds and above to wear 10-ounce gloves. Boxers competing elsewhere in the United States, wear eight-ounce gloves for fights held up to 147 pounds. The NSAC enacted the provisional change citing the ring deaths of Leavander Johnson, Martin Sanchez, and Jimmy Garcia, all of who fought in Nevada bouts weighing between 130 to 136 pounds and wearing eight-ounce gloves.

So, if the glove size is increased, catastrophic injuries will lessen, right?

Not so fast. Tell that to the families of Randy Carver, Beethaeven Scottland, and Stephan Johnson, three fighters who lost their lives fighting above 147, wearing 10-ounce gloves.

Historically, prior to 1978, all Nevada fighters wore eight-ounce gloves. Between 1978 and 1988, only championship fighters used the 10-ouncers. In 1988, regulations changed to the national standard where boxers above 146 pounds were required to use 10-ounce gloves. This was the same time the state moved the weigh-in to the day before the fight.

The 2006 glove change was just one recommendation made by the NSAC's Advisory Committee on Boxer Health and Safety, headed by Sig Rogich. The commission studied the effectiveness of the change, but had no intention of altering the regulation until Bob Arum of Top Rank asked that the issue be revisited. Top Rank wished to hold the Antonio Margarito-Miguel Cotto fight in Las Vegas this July, but both fighters refused to compete in 10-ounce gloves.

On April 24, the commission met to hear from the promoter and the public. Arum noted that no other jurisdiction has this rule and that eight-ounce gloves are safer for welterweights and junior welterweights because more knockouts and repeated punches occur with the bigger gloves.

Arum made a good point. The purpose of the boxing glove is to protect the hand. Therefore, increasing the glove size enables the fighter to throw more punches or harder punches without sustaining hand injury. One only has to look at mixed martial arts, which utilizes five-ounce gloves. As MMA fighters are throwing more punches to win by knockout, as opposed to submission holds, they are breaking their hands more frequently due to less protection offered by a five-ounce glove.

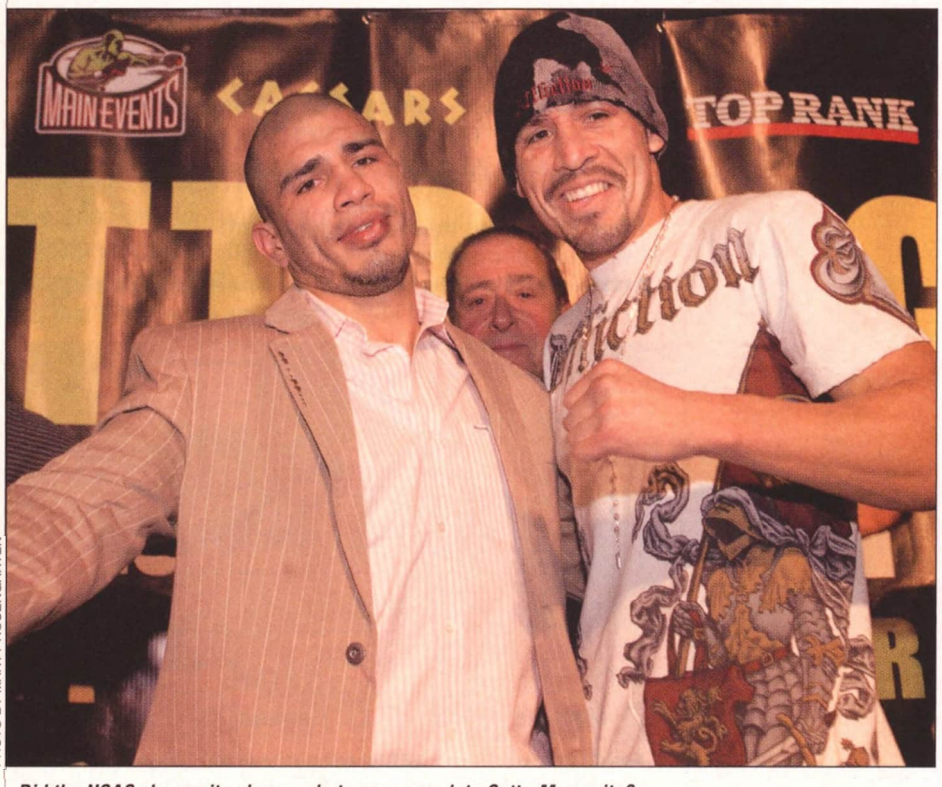


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Did the NSAC change its gloves rule to accommodate Cotto-Margarito?

Offering more protection to the hands enables boxers to throw more punches, not fewer. Sure, one could postulate that the fighters' hands will become more fatigued in the later rounds, but the two-ounce difference would do little to alleviate that problem. Therefore, with the rule change, lighter-weighted boxers are taking more punishment, which may not alter acute brain injury, but will certainly contribute to long-term damage.

Rogich, who originally championed the glove change, had apparently altered his view.

"I think it is unfair for us to be the only jurisdiction to mandate 10-ounce gloves unless we have

proof," said Rogich at the two-hour hearing. "I think you should continue to study this, but you could make a case that a boxer is less able to defend himself [with 10-ounce gloves]. You have no proof that one size is better than the other."

Dr. Timothy Trainor, a physician hired by the commission to conduct research, reviewed data from January 21, 2006, to November 2, 2007. The numbers were small, but there was no indication that 10-ounce gloves were safer in preventing knockouts or technical knockouts.

"You can spin the data any way you want and you may not reach statistical significance," noted Trainor. "There are multiple variables that can come into play that affect the outcome of a fight."

Dr. Trainer is correct.

There are numerous factors predisposing a fighter to serious injury. Anyone who closely follows the sport knows that repeated blows (more than knockouts) are what damages fighters. This along with rapid weight loss, dehydration, undisclosed injuries, and inadequate medical suspensions are factors infinitely more significant than the weight of a boxing glove.

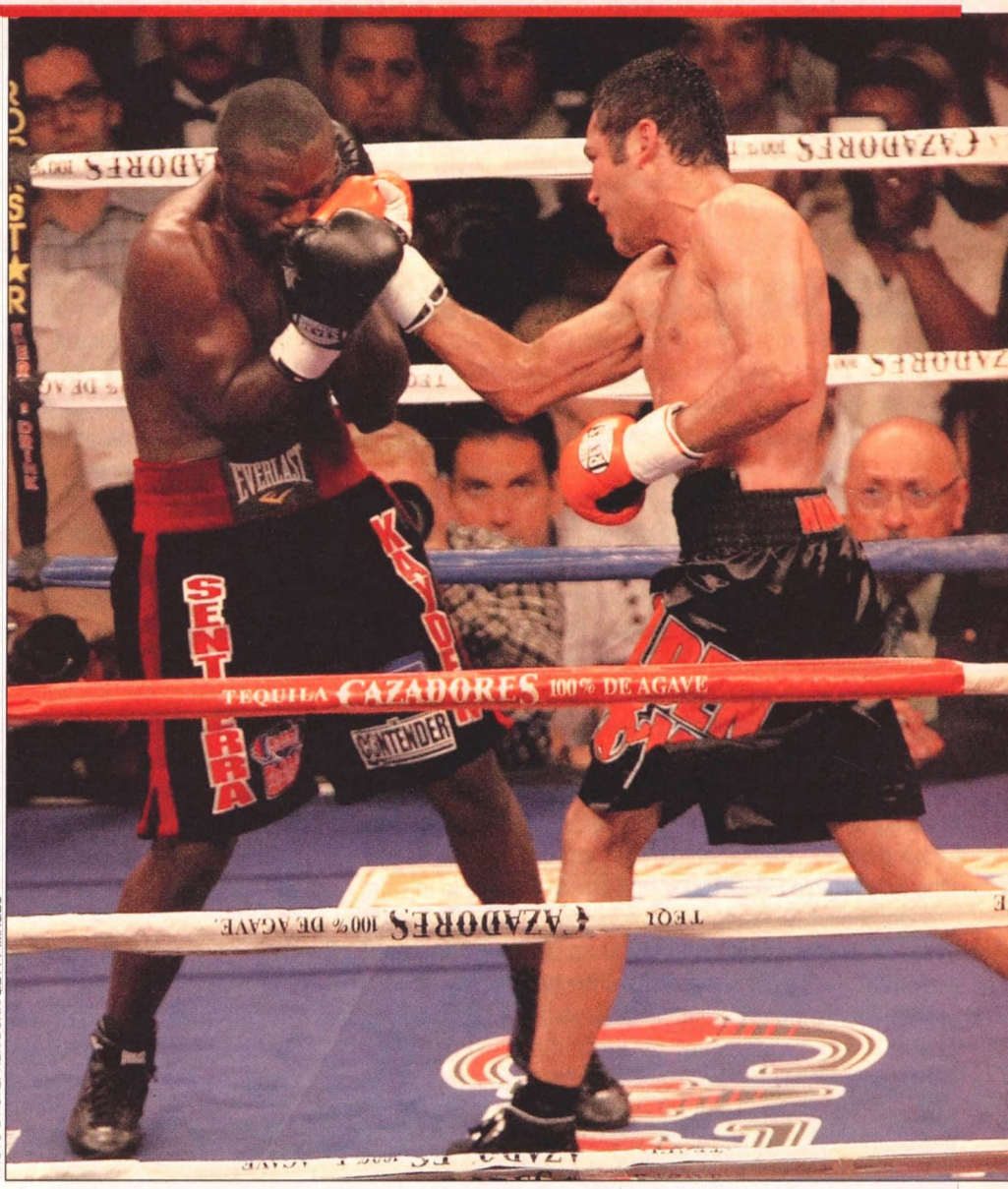


PHOTO BY STEPHEN DUNN/GETTY IMAGES

Gloves are designed to protect a boxer's hands, not his opponent's head

According to Everlast President Adam Geisler, there is little difference between Everlast's eight- and 10-ounce competition gloves. The latter offers a bit more padding.

After hearing from numerous parties, the NSAC amended its rule to allow fighters between 135 and 147 pounds the option as to which size glove they use. However, both parties must wear the same weighted glove, and if there is no agreement, the default glove size will be 10-ounce. The commission will continue to evaluate the matter and discuss again at a later date when more data is available.

"We found no evidence that an eight-ounce glove would be significantly less safe than a 10-ounce glove in those weight classes," Nevada Executive Director Keith Kizer told Dan Rafael of ESPN.com. "We did the stuff. It's good that we did. Now, instead of the commission telling the boxers [in those weight divisions] what they have to wear, we're giving the fighters a little more choice."

Wait a minute. They are giving the fighters a choice in something the commission tried to make everyone believe would save lives? If fighters are to get a choice, why don't other weight classes have a choice?

Changes for the sake of change are worthless and potentially harmful. While many of Nevada's deaths occurred in the featherweight or lightweight class, this isn't true elsewhere. Why didn't the state consider this when making a regulation change that can affect a fight's outcome?

"Boxing, like coal mining, tends to act after a catastrophe," said boxing historian Bert Sugar. "If Duk Koo Kim had died coming up the ring stairs, we would have stopped fighters entering the ring!"

Nevada will now host the Margarito-Cotto fight, the commission saves face in not rescinding a rule change that made no sense in the first place, and, more importantly, worthwhile safety changes continue to take a back seat. ■

By Jim Bagg

Biting Commentary

The perks of being a fight commentator on television are obvious: excessive amounts of money, free trips all over the globe, ringside seats that literally are ringside, fame, power, and the hot chicks that come with fame and power. (Sometimes those hot chicks end up asking for restraining orders and getting you arrested, but hey, that's the risk you run.)

For all of those perks, however, there's one rather significant negative that goes along with being a small-screen analyst: Every jealous viewer out there is jumping down your throat for any minor offense, particularly the boxing writers who make as much money in a year as you make in one night. And you can sure as hell count the Baggrophone among the jealous critics. The Baggareeno's hate affair with boxing broadcasters began more than four decades ago with the insufferable Howard Cosell, and it continues to this day.

But it isn't *all* hate. There might be one or two analysts out there who don't completely suck. So in the spirit of evenhandedness, here goes with both the Baggman's number-one compliment and his number-one criticism about every broadcaster on the major boxing networks (that means HBO, Showtime, ESPN, and Versus—we're leaving out Telefutura and Telemundo because the only Spanish words Speedy Baggzalez knows are "decision unanime" and "uppercut"):

JIM LAMPLEY

Best Trait: Nobody plays point guard as well as Lamps, setting up his fellow commentators, introducing the video packages, and even delicately working in Harold Lederman for comic relief, all without ever stuttering or stammering. He's silky smooth, like Oscar Robertson mixed with Billy Dee Williams.

Worst Trait: Continuing the point guard analogy, Lamps looks for his own shot a little too often. You're a blow-by-blow man, Jimbo, so leave the opinions to the color guys—particularly when you're having one of those nights where your opinions all favor the HBO house fighter.

LARRY MERCHANT

Best Trait: This gem from the Oscar De La Hoya-Steve Forbes fight was classic Merchant: After noting how De La Hoya has had trouble in the past with smaller opponents like Forbes, he said, "Maybe he's bit off *less* than he can chew." Merchant is a poet; he's the Bob Dylan of color analysts. (Except Larry probably has a better singing voice.)

Worst Trait: Nobody appreciates the comedic stylings of Larry Merchant quite like Larry Merchant. Just once, Larry, the Baggmeister would like to see you get through a punch line without cracking yourself up.

MAX KELLERMAN

Best Trait: It's easy to say "enthusiasm," but that's selling the cable-access kid a little short. The truth is, whether you agree with him or not, you have to admit that Kellerman almost always goes a step or two beyond the obvious observation.

Worst Trait: When he was on *Friday Night Fights* and

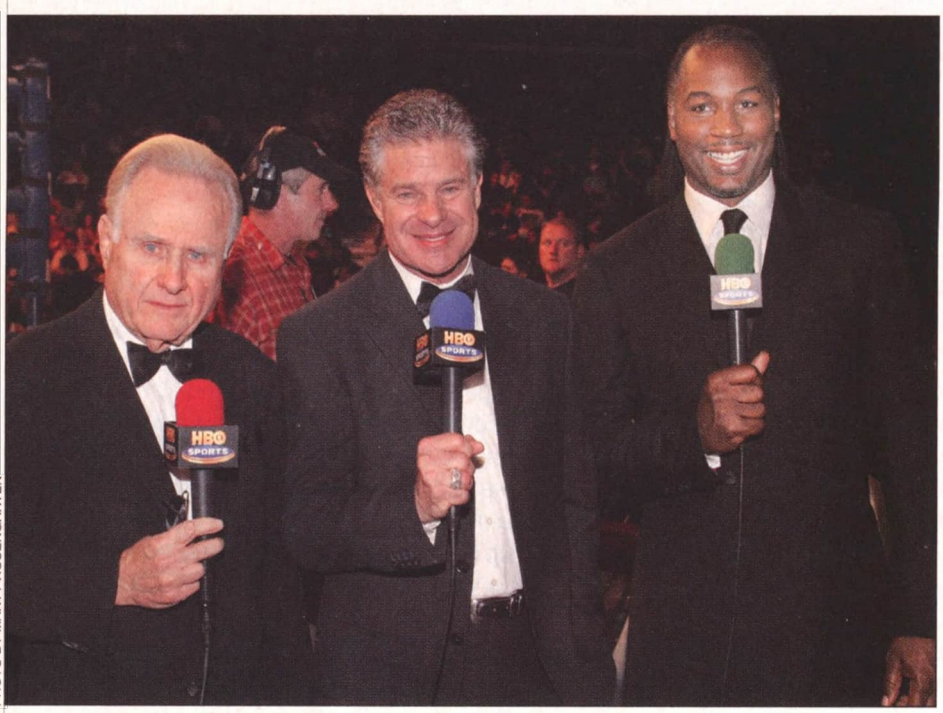


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

The poet, the point guard, and the ex-champ

that awful *Around The Horn* show, Max delivered his lines like he thought the whole audience was hearing-impaired. Now he's quieted down and is trying to be like Merchant ... and it feels phony. One way or another, Max needs to find the right volume.

EMANUEL STEWARD

Best Trait: Great trainers usually make great TV analysts because they provide technical and strategic insights that ex-fighters and ex-writers can't. Manny knows what he's looking at, and he's rarely wrong when he boldly declares one minute into the fight which boxer is going to win.

Worst Trait: Remember when Jermain Taylor was on the way up and Steward was gushing and declaring him ready for Bernard Hopkins even though Taylor was still facing clubfighters? It's called using his microphone to line up high-paying gigs, something the Baggalaureate would expect HBO to frown upon.

LENNOX LEWIS

Best Trait: What was it that the Baggmama told Baby Bagg about what to do when you don't have anything nice to say? Well, actually, here's one legitimate compliment for the greatest Jamaican-Canadian-British heavyweight of all-time: He scores points for humility when he pokes fun at himself for getting knocked out by Hasim Rahman. In that regard, he's much more tolerable than *Boxing After Dark* predecessor Roy Jones.

Worst Trait: Everything else.

BOB PAPA

Best Trait: Of all the broadcasters, Papa is probably the hardest to hate. He never says anything offensive. He doesn't try to be anything he's not. He's simply a polished pro who keeps things moving along. (Plus, how could you dislike a guy who looks like a cross between Al Pacino and '80s sitcom puppet ALF?)

Worst Trait: After doing boxing commentary for more than 15 years now, doesn't it seem like Papa still isn't an expert on the sport? The viewer shouldn't feel like he understands the game better than the guy getting paid to tell him what he's watching.

STEVE ALBERT

Best Trait: Like his brothers Marv, Al, and Fat, the Showtime blow-by-blow man has a sense of humor and a down-to-earth quality about him. Likeability has become an underrated quality in broadcasting, and Albert has it.

Worst Trait: As with Papa, there's the sense that he has never fully immersed himself in the sport. Maybe it's just the Baggmatician, but Albert seems like a guy who watches boxing once a month. (And Showtime just happens to ask him to call fights once a month, if you catch the Baggareensky's drift.)

AL BERNSTEIN

Best Trait: No, his Grandpa Munster hairdo is not his best trait. Instead, we'll go with his versatility (he can do blow-by-blow or color) and his ability to mesh with just about any broadcast partner. Specifically, Bernstein has brought out the best in Albert since replacing Bobby Czyz in 2003.

Worst Trait: Okay, maybe this is the right spot for the Grandpa Munster hairdo. Or, on an equally superficial note, Big Al has the least deep and booming announcer's voice this side of Lederman. It's a minor criticism, but let's just say the Baggatello would never buy a book-on-tape read by Bernstein.

NICK CHARLES

Best Trait: In about 30 seconds of watching him on *ShoBox* with "partner and pal" Steve Farhood, you can feel the genuine rapport they've built up. For some partners, the palling around ends the moment the cameras are turned off. It clearly isn't so with Charles and his color man.

Worst Trait: Charles is the undisputed king of yammering for the sake of yammering. The recent Robert Guerrero-Jason Litzau fight was good enough to speak for itself, but Charles just wouldn't let it. Hey, Nick, each round should not be viewed as an opportunity for a three-minute-long run-on sentence.

STEVE FARHOOD

Best Trait: The former editor of THE RING has never stopped being a writer, and it shows in his prepared "Behind The Numbers" segments, where he succinctly tells you everything you need to know about the prospects on *ShoBox*.

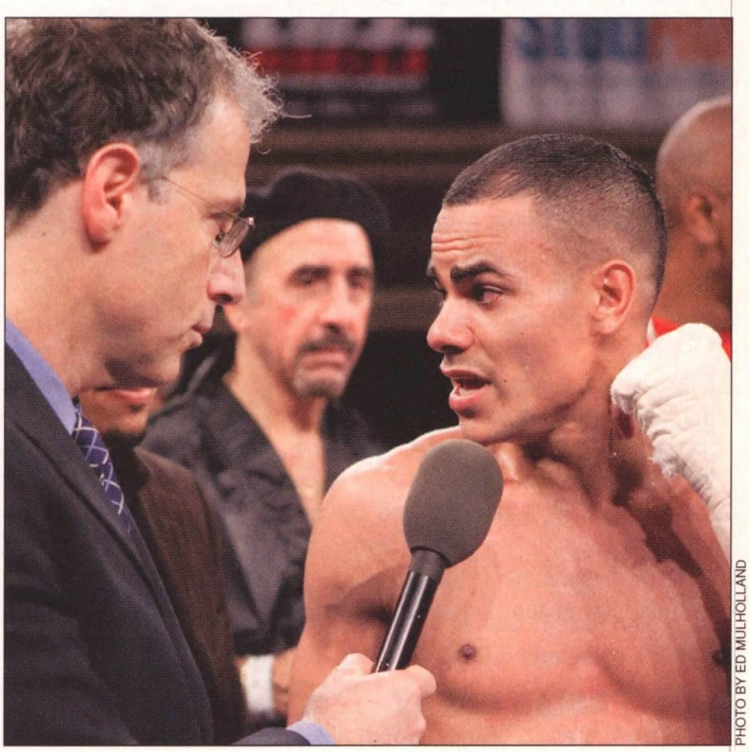


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Farhood (interviewing Edgar Santana) is still a writer at heart

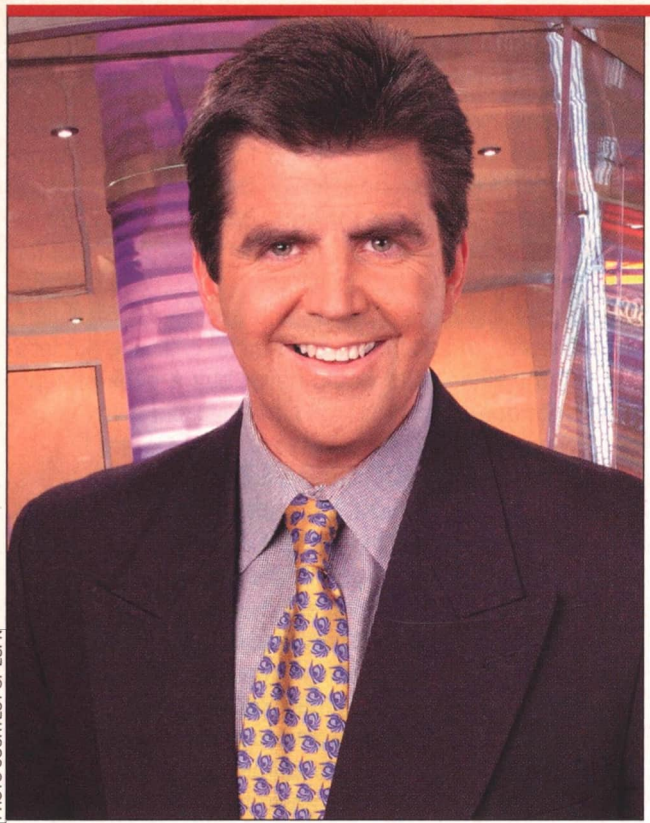


PHOTO COURTESY OF ESPN

Kenny: Influential advocate

Farhood does his homework, and the viewers benefit.

Worst Trait: The Baggucini Alfredo doesn't know what it is with Showtime color men and their hairstyles, but Farhood always shows up on camera looking unkempt, like he combed his hair with a piece of toast. The late-night *ShoBox* has an informal feel about it, but it isn't *that* informal.

WALLY MATTHEWS

Best Trait: Like Atlas, but without the preachy tone, Matthews never hesitates to rip on the fights and fighters in front of him, taking a fairly direct shot at the promoters and networks that hired him. You have to admire that. Matthews is nobody's shill.

Worst Trait: Wally can't seem to shake what the Baggeedoodledandy calls the "Forgettable Factor." He doesn't leave his stamp on fights. He never says anything so brilliant you run around quoting it the next day. He's just solid and serviceable, and sometimes being memorably awful gets you farther in this world.

Just look at the "legendary" Howard Cosell.

BRIAN KENNY

Best Trait: Kenny is that rarest of commodities: a mainstream talking head who actually takes the time to follow boxing. The result is that he's one of the fight game's most influential advocates, a man capable of convincing his uneducated colleagues to give the sport respect.

Worst Trait: Kenny takes way too many Friday nights off to go cover baseball or be a good dad or whatever it is he's doing. The dropoff from Kenny to sub Robert Flores is like reserving a Porsche from the car rental agency and finding out all they have for you is Le Car.

JOE TESSITORE

Best Trait: His willingness to get rid of that Taliban beard after one week of the failed experiment is up there. But we'll go with Tessitore's knack for calling the spectacular knockout with more enthusiasm than anyone else in the business. If the big blow lands, Tessitore is always ready with the perfect sound bite.

Worst Trait: Tessitore's greatest strength is also his greatest weakness. Sometimes, he just goes a little overboard with the excitement; if the action is slightly above average, Tessitore can still explode as if he's watching Zale-Graziano IV.

TEDDY ATLAS

Best Trait: When Atlas debuted on ESPN2 in 1998, he immediately turned heads by showing viewers the X's and O's in unprecedented depth. Question his motivational tactics as a trainer if you want, but you can't question his technical knowledge, and he's done more to share that technical knowledge with the viewers than any analyst before or since.

Worst Trait: Billy Graham and Jimmy Swaggart

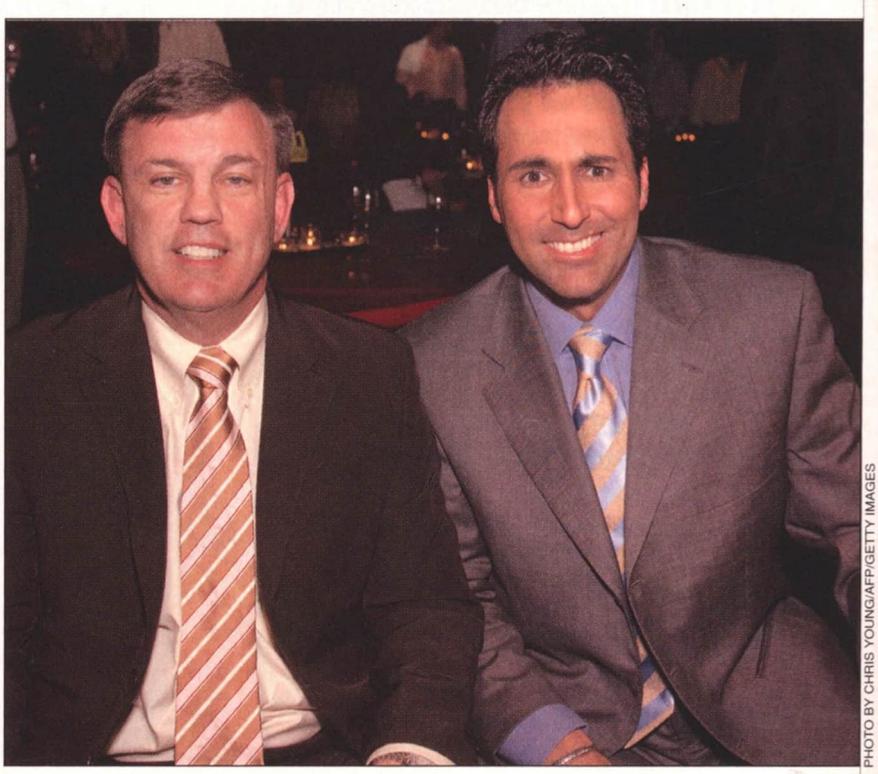


PHOTO BY CHRIS YOUNG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The Preacher and Mr. Enthusiasm

The Monthly Mailbagg

Fresh from a harrowing stay in a Chinese POW camp, the Baggman is back and ready to answer your e-mails:

Dear Mr. Baggmeister,

You are the most abrasive and cranky sportswriter that I have come across, and I love it! Keep up the good work. So, from one cranky old fart to another, do you think Calzaghe really won against Hopkins (I scored it 114-113 for B-Hop). While I believe the Welshman is a very good fighter (not "great"—a very liberally used term in this day and age), I can't help but think quantity of punches triumphed over quality of punches in that fight. And as a purist, I couldn't give an excrement what some computer says about how many punches Calzaghe landed on Hopkins! With all due respect to Intel, Apple, or whatever the hell HBO uses, RAM memory and MHz speed can never judge punch quality. Perhaps the judges thought there was no future in giving the 40-odd-year-old geriatric a close decision, when there are more intercontinentally marketable fights for Joe and the boxing world?

Brian Han
Sydney, Australia

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins agrees with reader and Bagg

Han Sandwich,

You used the words "abrasive" and "cranky," so the Baggaroo is going to get a bit abrasive and cranky on your ass: You scored it by one measly point for Hopkins, yet you're struggling for explanations on what nefarious motives the judges had in scoring it for Calzaghe? The Baggecutioner actually had the same scorecard as you did, but this was one decision nobody should waste their time whining or wondering about. It was a close fight. Hopkins scored a first-round knockdown, Calzaghe had his moments thereafter, neither man landed any damaging punches in the last 11 rounds, and they both left it entirely in the hands of the judges. Are CompuBox stats overrated? Absolutely. But remember, the judges never see those stats.

In other words, save your conspiracy theories for another day. Like the next time the Baggster gets shut out in the Barney Awards judging.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Greeley (red trunks) tuned up for Abell by losing to Andrew Purlette (right)

have nothing on Teddy when it comes to getting preachy. Atlas has a soapbox permanently attached to the soles of his shoes, and Jimmy Baggart is begging him to come down from there.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Can the JitterBagg get away with calling it a three-way tie? We had Miguel Delgado and his 2-7 record scoring a first-round kayo of 4-0 Cruz Valdivia on April 17. We had 10-6-1 Jose Hernandez registering a 12th-round TKO of 15-0-1 Rashiem Jefferson in Jefferson's hometown of Philadelphia on April 18. And we had 13-20-2 Andrew Greeley icing 20-1 Joey Abell in the fourth round in Abell's native Minnesota on April 26.

It's a tough call, but we'll go with Greeley, who hasn't just been around the block as a cruiserweight/heavyweight trialhorse; he's intimately familiar with the whole block's sewage system. He'd lost 12 of his last 15, but he proved more able than Abell, and after an 0-5 campaign in 2007, he's now 1-0 in 2008. Call his record this year 1-0 (2)—one knockout and one Stingray both to his credit. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Foregone Conclusion?

What did Oscar De La Hoya prove by fighting Steve Forbes? He proved that Floyd Mayweather will win the rematch. Forbes was competitive throughout but could not match Oscar's punching power. Even so, Forbes did score repeatedly and scratched Oscar up a bit. It reminded me of watching George Forman fighting a smaller guy named Gregorio Peralta back in 1970. Peralta boxed the ears off of Big George, but didn't have the power to hurt him. Foreman looked bad in winning a decision, and Peralta proved that George could be outboxed—years before Ali actually did it. But in De La Hoya's case he has already been outboxed by Floyd, and the Forbes fight only confirmed what we already know.

GROVER HILL III
Wewahitchka, FL

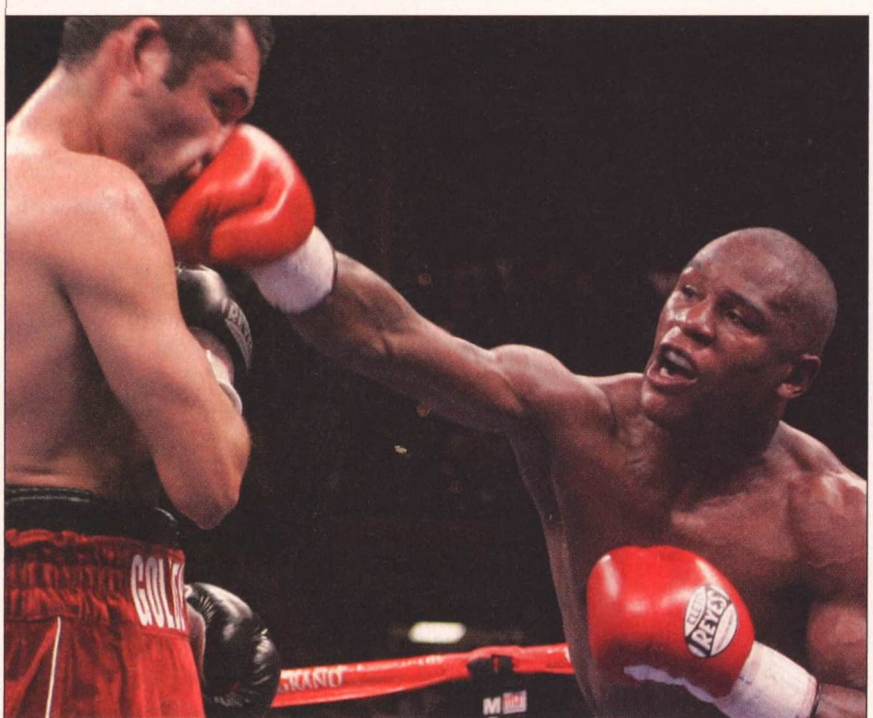


PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/GETTY IMAGES

Readers Grover Hill III and Don McMonigal have preconceived ideas about what might happen in the Mayweather-De La Hoya rematch. The fact that they took the time to write to THE RING indicates that they will probably buy the pay-per-view.

Does anybody really want to see another Mayweather-De La Hoya fight? It is evident by the way he ran for 12 rounds the first fight that Mayweather is scared to death of De La Hoya. Given his penchant for becoming a carnival act, as evidenced by his recent outing against The Big Show, the wrestler, why not match Mayweather with Gary Coleman, who is reportedly as mean as Mike Tyson. Better yet, give me a million dollars, and even at my age of 71, I'll climb into the ring and chase him with a ball bat for 12 rounds.

DON McMONIGAL
Surry, VA

Atlas Pro & Con

We don't agree with Rory Steele's negative comments about Teddy Atlas in the July 2008 issue ("Come Out Writing"). We especially enjoy Atlas' commentary and look forward to his prefight segment about what to watch for from each boxer. He is always right on, and it makes the fight more interesting to see his predictions play out.

H. & J. ALLEN
Hamilton, MT

Rory Steele's comment about ESPN2's Teddy Atlas in the July issue was right. Atlas' useless blithering throughout the fight cards is driving fans away. Most fans watch the Telefutura fights on Friday night anyway. We might not understand Spanish, but it's better than listening to Atlas all night long.

LARRY HAWK
Norco, CA

The Sound Of Truth

It was good to hear the ring announcer for the Bernard Hopkins-Joe Calzaghe fight announce the fight (three times) as being for THE RING

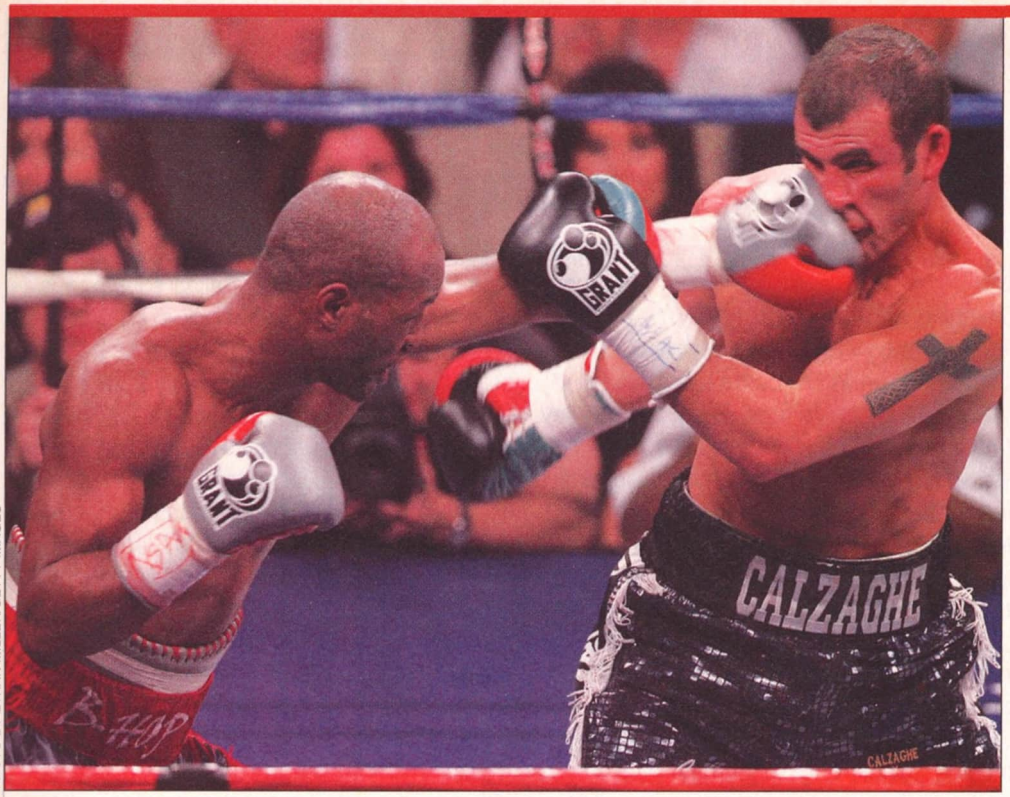


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Who really won the Calzaghe-Hopkins fight? Readers Andrew Owens and Victor Salcido both think that two of the three official judges got it wrong and Hopkins' harder punches should have earned the defending champion the nod.

magazine world championship. Since 1922, it has been THE RING correctly identifying the real world champions.

BARRIE READER
Surrey, England

Ghastly Gray

I couldn't agree more with comments made by reader Ramiro Ortiz in the July '08 issue ("Come Out Writing") about Jim Gray's interviews following the third Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez fight. Gray's self-serving motive has always been to generate controversy during interviews at the cost of ruining the occasion. You have to smile when Showtime announces him as "our own Jim Gray." Who else would have him?

ROBERT ATKINSON
Fenton, MI

A Vote For Pac-Man

Why is Floyd Mayweather still number one on your pound-for-pound ratings? I figure that beating Juan Manuel Marquez (number three pound-for-pound), would catapult Manny Pacquiao (number-two pound-for-pound) to number one. After all, Mayweather will be inactive until September, when he fights Oscar De La Hoya again.

ROBERT SANDERS
Bradford, PA

[Editor's note: The fact that the split decision in Pacquiao's favor was somewhat controversial prevented Manny from advancing in the pound-for-pound ratings.]

Laugh Riot!

William Dettloff's interview with Larry Holmes in the June 2008 issue of THE RING was the funniest interview I have ever read. The only thing funnier was the picture of Holmes fronting a band. Classic!

JEFF STEEN
devilboy6699_32@msn.com

Risk Factor

There is no doubt that unbeaten Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. is quite talented. However, when is the son of legendary Julio Cesar Chavez going to step up and take a risky fight?

STEPHEN DONTATELLI
Pittsburgh, PA

Quantity vs. Quality

I want to know how Joe Calzaghe can call himself a champion. The way he was pawing at Bernard Hopkins was a pathetic joke. Only a few of his punches were anything more than love taps. He may have landed more punches, but the right hand that Hopkins landed in the first did more damage than all of Calzaghe's punches combined. I don't care for either fighter, but Calzaghe proved one thing to me: He is a bona fide chump.

ANDREW OWENS
Sandy, UT

After carefully watching the Joe Calzaghe-Bernard Hopkins fight for the second time, it is obvious that Hopkins won the fight by landing the cleaner, sharper, more damaging blows. While Calzaghe outworked him, he threw mainly slapping-type punches with very little power behind them. In addition, most of them landed on Bernard's arms. Perhaps the judges were influenced by Bernard's infamous "white boy" comment.

VICTOR SALCIDO
El Paso, TX

Stop Hiding, Floyd

It was recently announced that Floyd Mayweather was suing Bob Arum and Top Rank for money owed to him. But let's tell it like it is, "Pretty Girl." You're once again looking for a loophole, a way out of fighting Top Rank-promoted Miguel Cotto. Like the great Joe Louis said before his fight with Billy Conn, "You can run, but you can't hide." Boxing exposes a man for what he truly is, in and out of the ring. Unless you fight Cotto, you'll remain a joke in the eyes of true boxing fans.

ROBERT McLEMORE
Como, TX ■

Looking Ahead

By Joseph Santoliquito

Coming In From The Cold

It always seems to be something with **Ruslan Chagaev**. First, in October 2007, the WBA heavyweight titlist withdrew from a title defense against then-WBO beltholder **Sultan Ibragimov**, claiming he was too sick to fight. Then, on May 21, Chagaev pulled out the illness card once more, this time before a title defense against **Nicolay Valuev**.

The Valuev fight has been rescheduled for July 5 at The Oberhausen Arena, in Oberhausen, Germany, and hopefully, Chagaev has a chicken soup clause in his contract, because boxing fans are starting to get a bit cynical about these cancellations.

Chagaev, 24-0-1 (17), has had only one title defense since wresting the WBA belt from Valuev, 48-1 (34), beating "The Russian Giant" by majority decision in April 2007. Chagaev's one title defense came against English journeyman **Matt Skelton**, who just three fights prior to meeting Chagaev for the title had climbed into the ring with **Suran Kalachyan**, who had a 9-9 record. Chagaev won an easy unanimous decision.

Since then, however, it's been one excuse after another. Or so it seems.

"Ruslan Chagaev suffers from a protracted virus infection," said Dr. Michael Ehnert on May 6, when the Valuev fight was originally postponed. "In medical terms, it's a viral laryngitis and pharyngitis. For non-doctors, it's a highly feverish viral infection of the upper respiratory tract with heavy symptoms. The medical treatment makes it absolutely necessary that he stop training."

When he actually does make it to the ring, Chagaev, rated number three by THE RING, has exhibited decent offensive skills, and he isn't afraid to engage opponents. Against Valuev in their first meeting, he gave away almost 100 pounds (319-228½) nearly a foot (7' to 6'1").

Valuev, rated number four by THE RING, has been waiting for the chance to get back the belt back he once wore for more than a year. He's remained active, scoring consecutive 12-round unanimous decisions over **Sergei Liakhovich** and **Jean Bergeron**, who had a combined record of 50-2 entering their fights.

Mirror, Mirror

Vic Darchinyan, ranked number 10 at junior bantamweight by THE RING, will have his second major fight at 115, stepping up to challenge IBF super flyweight titlist **Dimitri Kirilov**, August 2, at a U.S. site to be determined.

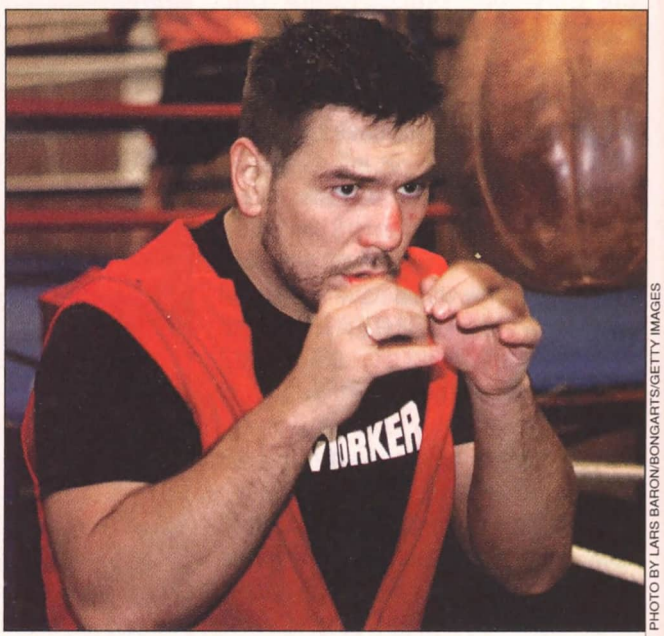
The fight carries some intrigue, as the fan-pleasing Darchinyan, 29-1-1 (23), fought to a draw in his first big encounter at junior bantamweight, against Z Gorres, in February, in the Philippines. The Australian southpaw is 1-1-1 over his last three bouts, having knocked out **Federico Catubay** in October 2007 and been stopped by **Nonito Donaire** in losing the IBF flyweight title in July 2007.

Kirilov, 29-3-1 (9), ranked number six by THE RING, is also 1-1-1 over his last three bouts. He dropped the IBF super flyweight title by split decision to **Luis Alberto Perez** May 2006, regained the vacant title by taking a unanimous decision from **Jose Navarro** in October 2007, and fought to a majority draw with **Cecilio Santos** this past May.

There is one striking difference between the two: Darchinyan has one-punch power—at least he did at 112. Kirilov can't crack an egg.

Listen Up

If Ruslan Chagaev comes down with yet another illness, the July 5 card in Oberhausen will at least be covered with a quality undercard, featuring WBA bantamweight titlist **Wladimir Sidorenko** making his seventh defense against **Anselmo Moreno**, rated 10 by THE RING at bantamweight. Sidorenko, rated three by THE RING, carries a 21-0-2 (7) record into the fight, though he's 3-0-2 (1) in his last five defenses. Moreno, 21-1-1 (8), hasn't lost since 2002 and has stopped two of his last three opponents ... That same night, junior welterweight **Ricardo Torres** takes on formidable **Kendall Holt**, 23-2 (12), on Showtime, from Planet Hollywood Casino in Las Vegas. ■



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It's nice to see Chagaev training again

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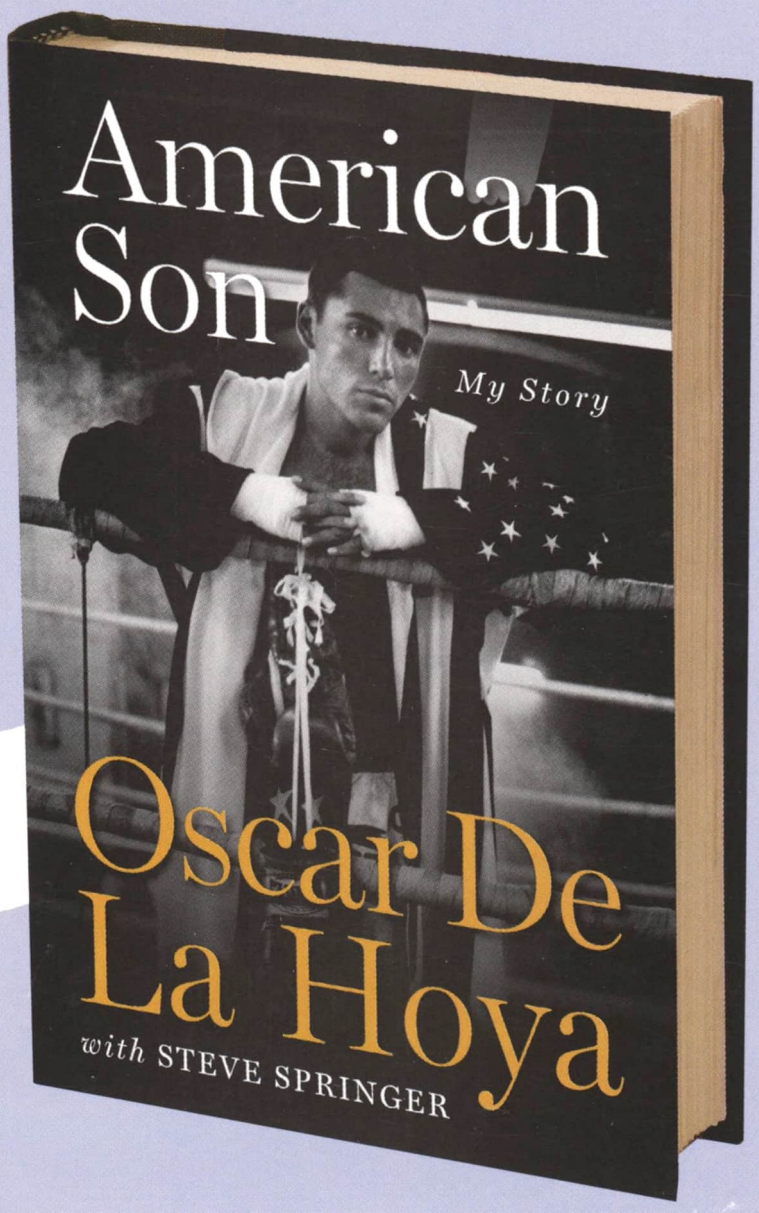

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